

# ON POSTHUMAN THEISM

“God Consciousness” and Leslie Dewart (1922-2009)

Allan M. Savage

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## ON POSTHUMAN THEISM

“God Consciousness” and Leslie Dewart (1922-2009)

### Preamble

Posthuman life <sup>1</sup> consists of many interpretations within contemporary academia which in fact amounts to a shift in the Western philosophical paradigm, both speculative and existential. Philosophical interpretations in the future will not be able to be made via the same philosophical perspectives of the past. European philosophy has given rise to a technological civilization. What makes this drive to technology so strong is that philosophers still believe that they are working to liberate mankind from its earlier fetters imposed by the natural order and tradition. In Grant's (1969:28) words:

Man has at last come of age in the evolutionary process, has taken his fate into his own hands and is freeing himself for happiness against the old necessities of hunger and disease and overwork, and the consequent oppressions and repressions. The conditions of nature – that “otherness” – which so long enslaved us, when they appeared as a series of unknown forces, are now at last beginning to be understood in their workings so that they can serve our freedom.

All aspects of contemporary life are affected by this new technological paradigm which raises new philosophical problems the solution of which cannot always be anticipated in advance. Our lived situation is existential, not theoretical, and we are “here” already in a new philosophical “land” that is, in fact, a *terra incognita*. With respect to religion in general and, the Christian

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<sup>1</sup> I say “posthuman,” not “post-classical,” because while at first blush it may appear that Western philosophy has advanced beyond the classical age of philosophy, technological intervention (unavailable in the classical age) may have altered the human being's status within creation vis à vis nature. That is to say, “when computer science is combined with quantum physics and nanotechnology, the result may soon be a combination of a human being and machine” (Hellesten, 2012:5).

religion in particular, philosophers are uncertain about their understanding of the faith. In posthumanism, the central philosophical question about God becomes not "does God exist?" a humanist philosophical question, but, rather "what place in human consciousness does God occupy, if any?" Alternatively expressed: has revelation of a decisive nature once and for all been made in the Christian tradition and been given a satisfactory answer in terms of the past for future understanding? To answer this question the posthuman philosopher and theologian need, at the very least, to recompose "classical" humanism which requires an historical understanding of how we arrived where we are today. Among the many factors that I could have selected to recompose humanism, I consider the notion of the evolution of human consciousness to be key in presenting posthuman theism. The evolution of human consciousness allows a philosophical interpretation that is not confrontational or polemical, but allows for an interpretation of the human being as effected by the intervention of technology and scientific progress.

My perspective in this book is not speculative, as is David Roden's *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human* (2015) but, rather existential following the perspective Rosi Braidotti gives in her Yale University Lectures (2017) "Memoires of a Posthumanist" and "Aspirations of a Posthumanist." <sup>2</sup> Sirkku Hellsten (2012:1) notes that "the neo-holistic view of the universe and the human place in it requires us to consider the 'existential risks' and seriously ponder the effects of the technological evolution to our social, cultural, ethical and metaphysical frameworks and normative principles." In presenting my ideas I do not undertake a confrontational approach. Rather, I suggest an evolutionary approach which is not characterized by an architectural, that is, custodial process of building an ideology, but rather an existential process of evolutionary organic growth and purpose of human consciousness. In George Grant's (1969:128) words:

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<sup>2</sup> Available on YouTube.

It is now generally assumed that the race has meaning (call it if you will purpose) only on the condition that we view ourselves as purposive and that none of those views are truths concerning the nature of things, but only ideologies which we create to justify our man-made purposes. There is no objective purpose to human or non-human nature which men can come to know and in terms of which the various occasions of life can be ordered. Purpose and value are the creations of human will in an essentially purposeless world.

Thus, I take human consciousness to be an evolutionary product in posthuman philosophy in an existential entity that may not be no longer traditionally human as a consequence of technological alteration. In short, it is not the creature generated via science fiction that I investigate but the transformed or transforming human being. Even though Roden (2015:4) notes that science fiction writers have trafficked in posthumans of various sizes and shapes for nearly a century, a new organic humanity will not come about through the addition of parts, like the unnamed creature in Shelly's *Frankenstein*, but through evolution of the primal individual. Were posthuman creatures capable of being produced, there is no suggestion that they would be greater or better than the humans that created them. A true posthuman philosophical problem is the religious one that first needs a proper solution before understanding posthuman theism. As Roden correctly recognizes, "Thus any philosophical theory of posthumanism owes us an account of what it means to be human such that it is conceivable that there could be nonhuman successors to humans." <sup>3</sup> (Note however, nonhuman successors remain theoretical entities.) This begs the question, as noted above, where will posthumans philosophically locate God? rather than: Does God exist? The question from Dewart's perspective is, "But the obviousness of the existence of God and his providence is gone. What is not gone is God." <sup>4</sup> So, my approach to posthuman philosophy, then, is rooted in human consciousness (existential

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<sup>3</sup> Roden (2015:6)

<sup>4</sup> Dewart (2016:200)

philosophy), not in speculative ideology, undertaken through a dehellenization of human thought.

## PART I

### EXISTENTIAL POSTHUMAN PHILOSOPHY

#### A Phenomenological Posthuman Theism <sup>5</sup>

I have not entitled Part I a “Philosophy of God” because that phrase denotes an area of philosophical systematization within an extensive history of various schools of thought. Rather, I explore more deeply my philosophical perspective cognizant of the philosophy of William James (1842–1910). <sup>6</sup> My approach in this book is primarily phenomenological, (an existential reflection on being), and secondarily epistemological (a reflection on knowledge). That is to say, I do not equate the two. A “posthuman” approach within philosophy is not (as yet, at least) a clearly identifiable school of thought. It suggests, however, a global approach to engaging reality which, to my mind is characteristic of the human manner of thinking. The term “global,” as I understand it, allows for cultural peculiarities which a term like “universal” does not.

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<sup>5</sup> Dewart (1989:31) notes that the phenomenological method “is not the diametric opposite of the ontological; it is a more comprehensive one than the latter, whose merits it preserves and whose inadequacies it tries to remedy.”

<sup>6</sup> James (2002:570) after noting that popular opinion accepts the existence of an “ideal power” wrote: “Meanwhile the practical needs and experiences of religion seem to me sufficiently met by the belief that beyond each man and in a fashion continuous with him there exists a larger power which is friendly to him and to his ideals. All that the facts require is that the power should be both other and larger than our conscious selves. Anything larger will do, if only it be large enough to trust for the next step. It need not be infinite, it need not be solitary. *It might conceivably even be only a larger and more godlike self*, of which the present self would then be but the mutilated expression, and the universe might conceivably be a collection of such selves, of different degrees of inclusiveness, with no absolute unity realized in it at all” [my italics].



It should be more evident in the second part of this book (presented in the form of a fictitious interview) that the notion of philosophical dehellenization as understood by Leslie Dewart (critically introduced by him throughout all his books) characterizes the existential posthuman philosophical perspective. It should be especially evident since the interview reflects an approach to a dehellenized philosophical understanding of God that has developed (matured) beyond classical humanism.<sup>7</sup> In entering upon this fictitious interview in Part II, I would encourage any hesitant reader to persevere through Part I to gain a sense of my present philosophical perspective that has developed through time as I had read and re-read Leslie Dewart’s works.

In its broadest sense as a philosophical term, I understand “humanism” to be that view of life in which the welfare and happiness of persons, individually and collectively, are primary. The understanding of the term has evolved over the years within the Western philosophical schools of thought which have a varied history. At the particular time of the Renaissance humanism rebelled against the perceived limitations of religious knowledge in light of the revival of classical learning. This classical learning encouraged the celebration of human existence to the full. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a naturalistic form of humanism developed which rejected all forms of the supernatural as religious, subsequently relying on reason, science and political democracy for a solution to humanity’s problems.

Beginning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century another perspective has started to appear within Western philosophical thought — “posthumanism.” The posthumanism perspective arises from humanism and is gaining acceptance among philosophers as an approach to deconstructing the inherited notion, or notions, of humanism. The prefix “post” suggests a view as “following upon” humanism, but not in a sequential order such that a posthuman

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<sup>7</sup> Edmonds & Warburton (2010:xi) note that a dialogue format presents an advantage over a plain text format in that dialogue offers an opportunity for explanation. “The questioner can stop the flow and seek clarification, or throw in an apparent counter-example so as to better understand what the other person means.”

order *necessarily* comes after the human order surpassing or nullifying it. In other words, posthumanity did not have to develop as an evolutionary philosophical perspective.<sup>8</sup> It has not been "fated" to appear, but rather was chosen (formulated) by Western philosophers as a new interpretive perspective.<sup>9</sup> Posthumanity is a self-conscious, self-discovery of a new concept for a discourse within the human philosophical experience that coexists alongside the classical understanding of experience. That is, the former does not replace the latter. Further, critical posthumanity takes in questions of the meaning of globalization, technoscience, capitalism, climate change, etc. that deliberately blur the demarcation between fiction and fact, imagination and reality.<sup>10</sup> In light of such blurring, my focus at this stage on posthuman thinking presents an attempt at understanding human discourse as it affects belief in God. While I undertake this focus within Western Christianity, I suggest that my philosophical remarks, with proper adjustments, may be legitimately applied within any cultural understanding of God, or the gods.

Posthumanity, as I interpret the concept, functions more like a *review, or exegesis, of the interpretation of human experience that asks questions like*: How did we come to think of ourselves as human? What exactly does it mean to be consciously human? What are the implications for nonhuman entities, such as animals, machines (computers), God, the environment in a posthuman context? A *critical* posthuman approach is one that distinguishes between a *popular (uncritical)* and a *philosophical (reflective) approach* that investigates the meaning of human activity. Thus, my reflection on God, or theism, is influenced by

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<sup>8</sup> I intend the qualitative meaning of posthumanity as opposed to the quantitative meaning of posthumanism throughout this book.

<sup>9</sup> Concerning "fate" Adolfs (1966:61) has noted: It would be entirely wrong to see the course of events in the world as caused by blind fate, by divine providence or by some other mindless process in nature."

<sup>10</sup> I would add the contemporary notion of 'virtual reality' as well.

Leslie Dewart whose philosophical perspective was in turn influenced by that of José Ortega y Gasset, I believe.<sup>11</sup>

Basically, what is at stake in posthuman philosophy is a rethinking of the relationship between human agency and the role of technology, environmental and cultural factors which draw together a number of aspects that make up humanity's 21<sup>st</sup> Century understanding of reality and cosmology. Posthuman philosophy links these aspects to their beginnings which have been disclosed within the history of philosophical understanding. The words of Charles Moeller capture the genesis of my perspective.

Revolution is out of date, outmoded, because the problems have become so complex, for instance from the economic and social point of view, that the best way to spoil everything is to work in a whirlwind. What is required is patience, attention, competence. ... What is of primary importance is interhuman relations. If we are not successful in creating among men, clans, races, nations, a *consciousness of humanity*, we will never get anywhere. [my italics]<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> José Franquíz notes that Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) held that the principle: "I am myself plus my circumstances," is one pole of the philosophical problem of life. The other is reason. The two poles function together, but not in dialectical opposition, but through necessary coexistence. Life does not consist in being (as a static concept), but in coming-to-be (as a movement) in which direction, purpose, and values are realized. Time-wise, the present and the past become articulated and meaningful only in relation to the future (cf. Runes, s. v. Ortega y Gasset, 1963, p. 221).

<sup>12</sup> Moeller (1968), p. 437.

### A Shift to Posthuman Theism

Life presents me with different experiences, each true, but not in the manner I had previously thought. That is to say, not one experience, or a collection of experiences, exhausts the truthfulness of the reality in which I live. I have been educated conventionally through a traditional Western intellectual, rational, philosophical and scientific approach. To accept the persuasiveness of this system was to attain to the truth, I was told. I understood this system to hold life's end and purpose. To reach out and grasp truth intellectually was the method and purpose of philosophy which allowed me allegedly to understand and master my life and physical environment. This system would account for my place in the cosmos. But, given the limited success at understanding and accounting for my place in the cosmos, I became puzzled about the effectiveness of this understanding of truth. I was not satisfied to remain puzzled, however. I came to realize that I required a philosophy in life that clarifies my experiences, and at the same time, promotes opportunities for the advancement of such philosophy.

In determining that philosophy, the first of two assumptions that I made in my life was that philosophical advancement is a progressive adaptation in understanding the world through human consciousness, since only as humans can we consciously understand it. Classically, this understanding is understood as *apprehending* the world objectively through experience. However, my individually fabricated world is not merely apprehended as existing objectively in itself. Rather, I am conscious of the relationship between objects in my world that are subjectively *comprehended* by me. That is to say, I make judgements about the relationships among the objects in my world of experience. As well, other individual human worlds are not only physically *connected* to mine, they are *related* to me existentially. Connections, as I understand them, are restricted to concrete presences that constitute the context for infrahuman and human organisms. Relationships, on the other hand, constitute the transcendental reality of human and infrahuman organisms which

disclose the conscious presence to other objects in the concrete world.

Life, obviously, is a necessary pre-requisite for the human mind which is the generator of philosophy. Life is the *sine qua non* of human existence, as the scholastics phrased it, and of my thinking. Note that computers, which do not participate in life, do not think — they merely compute. But I think, and computers are made to help me in my thinking. (I recall that as a student I typed my thoughts on a portable typewriter made for typing, not thinking.)

In living, I may give myself to life's work, life's objectives and purposes, but fail to give myself to life itself. Any philosophy that offers me only explanatory causes of my life's works, objectives and purposes dissatisfies me. My dissatisfaction probably arises because such a philosophy ultimately reduces life to a mere technological science. To alleviate this dissatisfaction, I must assign meaning to my life and not only accept the significance of scientific discovery. In assigning meaning to my life, I differentiate both my character and presence within the cosmos through a philosophical contemplation that distinguishes "me" from that which is "not-me." In my philosophical contemplation, I experience *being* as it is in itself, not *reality* as it is in itself. In other words, I experience that which is finite (being), not that which is infinite (reality). Contrary to the classical understanding I inherited, I cannot conceptualize reality, since it is beyond intelligible being. Reality, without becoming exhausted, is that out of which being is differentiated — an understanding I initially received from Leslie Dewart.

As a thinking finite being, my philosophical dissatisfaction grew as I tried to interpret my experiences with some degree of accuracy realizing that I am not flawless. Given minimal success with traditional Western philosophy, I sought a philosophical solution elsewhere and not within the tradition I had inherited. However, even here, my philosophical concepts which were meaningful to me and to other persons, still remain inadequate.

The classical approach, which I had been using, is built upon a Hellenistic foundation which led to the general idea of a universal

Reason ultimately reconciling all variation and chaos within itself. From a religious point of view, I had understood this universal Reason as God. In the mind of many of the Eastern (Asian) philosophers a corresponding notion of the universal Reason is the "One" recognized by their scholars as constituting ultimate reality. As W. T. Chan writes:

There was the Ying Yang school which emphasized ying and yang as the two fundamental principles, always contrasting but complementary, and underlying all conceivable objects, qualities, situations, and relationships. It was this school that provided a common ground for the fusion of ancient divergent philosophical tendencies in medieval China. ... China developed her own Buddhist philosophy consistent with her general philosophical outlook. We need only mention the Hun-yen school which offered a totalistic philosophy of 'all in one' and 'one in all,' the T'ien-t'ai school which believes in the identity of the Void, Transitoriness, and the Mean. ... These schools have persisted because they accept both noumenon and phenomenon, both *ens* and non-*ens*, and this 'both-and' spirit is predominately characteristic of Chinese philosophy.<sup>13</sup>

Currently, my understanding of reality is that which I reside *in*; reality is not *beside* me, *with* me, nor pervades *through* me. Rather, I am *in* it. Philosophically, reality is and remains an unknown "necessity." Thus, I live in a philosophical mystery, not in an intellectual puzzle, and I experience aspects of that mystery as being both concrete and transcendent. Were my life merely a puzzle I would be able to solve it scientifically. Further, this philosophical mystery appears to be the source of my seemingly incurable restlessness, it seems, until I learn to rest in it. St Augustine had this insight long before I did.<sup>14</sup> When conscious, I envision (differentiate) concepts from within this reality of what it means "to be." In my philosophy, concepts that arise out of reality

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<sup>13</sup> Chan (1963:51).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Confessions*, Book 1:1.

must reflect in some manner what it means “to be.” This philosophical conviction is common to all humanity despite the diverse conceptualizations of its formulation — cultural, sociological or philosophical.

My second assumption is that reality is beyond the human ability to be comprehended in itself, since it is tantamount to life. Here I accept Leslie Dewart’s understanding of reality as *non-being* or that which is beyond being, a notion introduced in his book, *The Future of Belief: Theism Come of Age*.<sup>15</sup> Life is dynamic and comprehended only limitedly by the human organism which participates partially in its fullness. To my mind, it is of the “nature” of life to communicate itself to concrete being in the guise of an individual organism. Thus, the dynamic (the life) of a living inhuman organism may be recognized by humans as *purposive*, but such a dynamic is only *purposeful* when consciously initiated by human organisms. At this evolutionary stage, the human organism, then, is a unique conscious manifestation of life.

Classical Christian understanding given its philosophy and subsequent theology teaches that God made humanity in the likeness and image of God. In light of the history of Western philosophy, perceiving life ultimately as “God” or “gods” is understandable. However, an alternative philosophical interpretation is possible. The history of ideas demonstrates this and I offer the thinking of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) as an example. For him, God is only the conceptual projection of the ideal man. Yet, according to the editors of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Although Feuerbach denied that he was an atheist, he nevertheless contended that the God of Christianity is an illusion.”

<sup>16</sup>

I consider philosophizing about the transcendent or the supernatural to be a “natural” human activity — although not universal all humans. As Dewart has noted:

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<sup>15</sup> Dewart’s distinction of reality as “beyond being” has been cited by Robert Prentice (1971:240).

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ludwig-Feuerbach>

Both the phenomenal and the ontic “gods,” notwithstanding their exalted status and wonderful characteristics (e.g., extraordinary powers, elusiveness, and, not infrequently, immortality), are man’s fellow inhabitants of this world and neither more nor less real than all other worldly entities; *invisibilia* rather than “gods” would be a much better name for them.<sup>17</sup>

Through posthuman philosophizing, then, I continue to adapt my identity in light of the presence of the truth of God in my life.

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<sup>17</sup> Dewart (1989:314).



## **A Posthuman Understanding of Life**

A characteristic of our time is the absence of a predominant world vision guiding the peoples of the earth. Even our West is without a life-scheme to which the total community at least partially subscribes. All current philosophic blueprints for man and his habitat are minority opinions. As a result, there is an openness of mind in our contemporaries to hear the theories of all the groups which make up our human family. It is not surprising, then, that so many thoughtful men are energetically curious to find out just how the Catholic Church considers life and society. ... We are in a time of crisis. A new period of history is aborning. Such a movement carries with it a high responsibility for the men who live in it. Much which we know or knew will go, and new things will come. The new structure of things, in order to be highly satisfactory, should retain the solid values we have gained.<sup>18</sup>

My observation of biological evolution, and other analogously adapted evolutionary understandings, is that organisms are evolving (moving) towards plurality, not towards unity. As well, differentiation within my consciousness generates interpretations that are "conceptually substantive," that is, I can distinguish one concept from another. My conscious differentiation results in ideas, or better, intelligible notions that are particular to my experience. I understand that to exist is to be a being and this existence is a pre-requisite to any sort of "higher" life that I perceive or conceive. Nothing can be "more real" to me than myself. My self is the test and the measure of my real existence. As I individuate myself in life, I must assume that there are other beings who are in some manner like myself, yet who are separate from me and act differently than me. (If they are infrahuman these beings may be sentient and conscious like me.) It follows, then, that I am able to constitute a world of friendships and social affections by relating myself to the other human beings that I encounter. Or, acknowledging Roden's (2015:12) observation, I "do not merely represent the world but actively organize it, endowing it with value, form or meaning."

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<sup>18</sup> Gustave Weigel in Fremantle (1956:9/19).

Unless I consciously constitute my identity, I am not intelligible to myself or to others. To be known I must construct my identity. Intelligibility is proper to human consciousness, but not proper to the consciousness of all organisms as the "New Age" philosophers are wont to have it. It is through conscious willing and acting that I differentiate myself, that is constitute my identity, within reality.<sup>19</sup> I consider reality as a metaphysical "force," distinguishable and capable of presenting its presence to me (and others) or *seemingly* to do so. Within the flow of time understood in the Western manner (that is, linearly) the past is behind me, the present is around me, and the future before me. All beings, animate or inanimate, are subject to this conception of time since they exist. Quantum physics, however, continues to shed new light and understanding on the flow of time. Carlo Rovelli offers new light and understanding in his *Reality is not What It Seems: The Journey to Quantum Gravity*.

My life-world, as constituted through my consciousness, is in constant motion and demands new responses to my particular existential (ontological) situation. Furthermore, I construct my life-world as a unity of relationships, not as a union of ideas conceived in a Hellenistic fashion. My unique self-differentiation occurs within that mysterious reality beyond concrete being, i.e., life. Through the process of my individuation, my self-differentiated identity also identifies the presence of the "not-me." Further, instead of waiting to be moved, that is, being acted upon, in the process of individuation I seek to move (act) myself in light of my memories, reflections and present experiences. In such activity I assign meaning to all objects and events in their phenomenological realization within my consciousness.

In this process of assigning meaning I also construct my personality as I differentiate myself within reality. Reality is not known to me directly, but only indirectly as my personality characterizes me from others who are identified as "not-me." I

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<sup>19</sup> I do not have in mind here "virtual reality," a digital philosophical notion I consider elsewhere.

mean this distinction in the sense of William James' understanding, as quoted by Ralph Winn:

One great splitting of the whole universe into two halves is made by each of us, and for each of us almost all of the interest attaches to one of the halves; but we all draw the line of division between them in a different place. When I say that we all call the two halves by the same names, and that those names are 'me' and 'not-me' respectively, it will at once be seen what I mean.<sup>20</sup>

I presume that James does not mean "halves" in the mathematical sense of parts being equal, but merely as two parts that constitute a whole.

Eccentricity (implying chaos) is not to be equated with a healthy individuality or personality in my life-world. A healthy individuality (I do not mean individualism) constitutes what has been differentiated from reality, i.e., the self. (An eccentricity may be developed later.) In short, a healthy individuality appropriates and manages the arts of living to overcome the chaos of experience. My mind requires a sense of harmony and coherence *within itself* since it cannot tolerate the confusion of accepting experience "as is" without an explanation of why or how it came to be so. Further, any explanation must be such that it accurately conforms to my experience and is not false. In other words, it must confirm that my experience is true. It is through an experience of harmony and unity *within myself* that I have come to accept that there must be a particular kind of external reality (movement), a "not-me," that grounds my existence (being). That is, there is a difference between the reality of my physical being and the metaphysical reality beyond being.

This different kind of metaphysical reality beyond being cannot be known through any epistemology. I know only my actions within it. And, one, and only one action is truthfully known to me. That is the action of my own free will. Every other action, not caused by me, is inferred as to its cause being a "not-me." Further, this transcendent "not-me" which is beyond being, and which I

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<sup>20</sup> In Runes (1963:287).

infer from my experience, does not interfere (as an agency) with the laws of physics, psychology or any of the sciences. From a philosophical and anthropological perspective, such a transcendent “not-me” is natural to the human world and harmonizes with the patterns of life — as history often demonstrates.

Philosophically, I must form some hypothesis to solve the riddle of my presence in the cosmos of which I constitute a part, since any answer as to my status here is not self-evident. Thus, my hypothesis is that I act as “co-creator.” In the act of co-creating, my freedom has been expanded and increased, and things are under my jurisdiction in the secondary sense of human *manageability*, within the cosmos and not in the primary sense of creation *ex nihilo* of the cosmos. (This is at the core of my present posthuman understanding.) My co-creating status is as much a mystery as is God. In his book, *Lex Orandi or Prayer and Creed*, George Tyrrell (1861-1909) speaks of a role for the philosopher who is a believer in God. “The believer is justified in showing that philosophical and historical reasoning tallies with, or does not contradict his belief, but in this he plays the role not of believer but of philosopher or historian.”<sup>21</sup> In short, he suggests that one’s faith is not knowledge and ought not to replace one’s philosophy.

As a philosopher, I contemplate three fundamental categories of values in life-world. I understand each being consciously and progressively developed. These values are philosophical, yet are often seen as religious in the tradition of Western thought. They are:

- 1<sup>st</sup> A basic *physical* value of living organisms (a concrete value).
- 2<sup>nd</sup> A *transcendental* human value conceptualized as a virtue (the abstract values).
- 3<sup>rd</sup> A *mysterious* value of faith (affectivity as a true/real value).

These distinct values do not bring about any fragmentation of my unified being as a person. I remain a unified living organism with these values as qualities of my being. Thus, my conclusion is a

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<sup>21</sup> Tyrrell (1903:167).

posthuman reversal of what I was taught, i.e., that a progressive move towards unification (union) of my fragmented experience was necessary to attain a complete and true knowledge. My experience, however, is that these physical, transcendental and mysterious values constitute a dynamic unity (not union) as myself which continually evolves and which I interpret in a non-classical perspective. That being the case, I am no longer a Hellenist philosopher more interested in philosophy, the discipline of the academy, than as wisdom of life; more interested in the metaphysics of being, than in understanding reality as life; more interested in the theory of life, than in living. All this to say that I am a philosopher whose interest is the posthuman person.

### A Phenomenological Perspective

A phenomenological philosophical perspective discloses the presence of God in my life through a practical and ethical behaviour. Such a perspective discloses not only how correctly I understand my thoughts but also how authentically I implement them in practice. I realize that not all scholars accept the phenomenological approach to experience as one that clarifies. To some scholars the phenomenological method obscures more than clarifies. In my philosophical contemplation, I have come to realize that there is a unity constituted as me, the contemplating subject, and "the other," as either an object (concrete or metaphysical) or as another contemplating subject. Even given this realization of unity my contemplation is still often plagued by the scholasticism which has introduced a formal dichotomy into the structure of my philosophical understanding. That is to say that in the scholastic perspective I had been thinking *about* God, while *outside* God, rather than thinking about God while being *within* God. God and I are not separate entities any more than life and I are separate entities. Thus, through my phenomenological understanding I interpret my experience as occurring in a non-dichotomous life-world and within the presence of God, that is to say, as distinguished from, but not separate from, God.

In my phenomenological understanding something other than mere *intellectual* change occurs in my thinking. A change in my *consciousness* takes place. Within my phenomenological understanding there is a re-structuring in the relationship between me and the other, the "not-me." I am now conscious of the other from a different perspective. That is, I understand the other, the object of my consciousness, not via a Platonic ideal, but as a product of intentionality. That is, through intentionality I assign meaning to others and myself within a subjective interpretation of my life-world. This subjective assignment does not, of necessity, conform to the static norms I formerly used to interpret my experience in a classical context. Rather, this subjective assignment is expressed through an active process of conscious differentiation that defines what it means for me "to be."

From a religious perspective I have often noticed that when old gods die people do not generally turn to atheism. They invent new gods, even secular ones. However, their inventions do not always prove satisfactory. What may prove satisfactory, however, in place of the invention of new gods, is a phenomenological religious understanding that re-interprets the old gods, as it were. In short, the old gods require a re-interpretation, not as they exist in themselves, but as an interpretation of the relationships between them and believers that lead to new consciously creative insights. That is to say, new posthuman patterns of thought must be created by those faced with new experiences of themselves to meet the challenge of our present-day. John Kersey makes this same point within the context of non-traditional online education.

Teaching online means that, in an economic, time-efficient and resource-efficient manner, the benefits of the tutorial system can be realized. The skills needed of faculty are now more than merely operating software and marketing work; there is need to comprehend the needs of the environment of distance learning and to respond to it with understanding. It is here that the experience of faculty who have themselves studied via distance learning and who are aware of its challenges is valuable.<sup>22</sup>

During the time of the theologian George Tyrrell (1861-1909) a trend began away from professional theologians serving only the doctrinal and dogmatic needs of the Church. This new trend was a turn towards a scientific religious philosophy as a methodology for addressing the existential needs of the individual believer. As the believer's scientific needs were being addressed, in 1897, from the Protestant perspective August Sabatier (1897:345) could write: "The present condition for theology is whether it may achieve a place in the consecrated choir of modern sciences, or whether it will be shut out for want of any common interest with them." Frequently, this methodology differed from that of the ecclesiastical corporation. This trend proved to be minimally successful. Its limited success, to my mind, was due to its failure to

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<sup>22</sup> Kersey (2009:200).

renew philosophy *as a discipline* within the Western Church. Rather, the magisterium continued to adhere to the classical perspective. In 1968, Roderick Mackenzie in an address to a Theological Congress in honour of Canada's centenary, wrote:

At times, biologists, paleontologists, sociologists, psychologists, may have contributions to make of very great importance to the magisterium: if not directly, as expounding truths of faith, still indirectly, *as warning of the existence of new problems*, which may oblige to a re-examination of traditional teachings, or of traditional ways of expressing them" [my italics].<sup>23</sup>

MacKenzie's observation was not given credence by the magisterium. Could this be because from the magisterium's perspective at the time no renewal was needed?

Some academics might counter my point by citing the renewal of philosophical thought taking place within certain Western universities at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. However, in an ecclesial context it appears to me that no significant advancement towards posthuman thinking has been achieved as yet. The perspective reflected in the Decree on the Training of Priests, that identified the place of classical philosophy in the Church's magisterial tradition, remains the preferred approach. "Philosophical subjects should be taught in such a way that students are first of all gradually led to a solid and coherent knowledge of human nature, the world and God, guided by *the philosophical tradition of lasting value*" [my italics].<sup>24</sup> "The philosophical tradition of lasting value" is classical philosophy which is rooted in scholasticism and remains to a great extent the formal presentation by the church's magisterium, but not necessarily the expression of the community of believers, the *sensus fidelium*. Today, there is need to establish a philosophy that will be suitable for addressing the expression of the meaning of life arising from humanity-as-a-subject *within* creation, and not humanity-as-an-object *of* creation. That is to say, humanity is not

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<sup>23</sup> Mackenzie (1968:119).

<sup>24</sup> Flannery (1996:375).



merely a part of creation but humanity, as an agent, co-creates itself within the cosmos. In the contemporary religious climate, I detect a renewed interest in the human individual as a person, in philosophy, theology and psychology. And, as such, the person may be better understood from a posthuman perspective, which views these three disciplines not so much as merely academic disciplines, but as legitimate human activities seeking after wisdom and not bound by any particular intellectual heritage.

History shows that much expanding of human understanding or philosophical advancement in theistic philosophy has been the work, not of ecclesiastical theologians, but of faithful individuals whose role was sometimes in opposition to the ecclesiastical magisterium. These individuals often intended to correct or modify the formal teaching of the Church. The very foundation of humanism, based on a pre-modern classical anthropology, has been questioned from within posthuman philosophical thinking. What the most appropriate response should be to this questioning presents itself as a significant philosophical question for our time. If speaking of God really means that I am at the same time saying something meaningful about myself, then thinking about God in the philosophical categories that belong to an earlier stage of human experience are simply not satisfactory. The secular character of posthuman thinking notwithstanding, I continue to identify the Church as an advantageous *locus* for my contemplation of God. I say this in light of the claim of the divine guarantee of God's incarnation given within Christian revelation. However, as a matter of philosophical conviction, I do accept that there are epistemological limits to Catholicism, as classical ideology, but not to Catholicity, as a phenomenological notion. In my estimation, Catholicism is limited by Hellenic idealistic philosophy, whereas Catholicity is free from such constraints.<sup>25</sup>

Humanity searches for a better world but often does so without seeking a better philosophical explanation of its experience of that which is divine in the world than the explanation it has inherited.

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<sup>25</sup> Had Charles Davis (1923-1999) understood this distinction, he may have concluded his reflections differently than he did in *A Question of Conscience*.

In my experience, I have recognized that an evolutionary concept of nature is in the process of replacing a static concept of nature. This presents new problems for my philosophy, theology and psychology and calls for a new analysis and interpretation.<sup>26</sup> That being the case, to my mind, the solutions arrived at through classical philosophy must be replaced by solutions arrived at through phenomenologically interpreted consciousness. Historical study is most profitable as it helps account for how I arrived at my present philosophical understanding. Recognizing that my thinking has evolved resulted in a significant discovery in my philosophical perspective. That is, I have replaced the concept of *being* with the notion of *coming-into-being*, understood "as the emergence of something which is not ultimately reducible to its antecedents."<sup>27</sup> (Henri Bergson's (1859-1941) insights in *Creative Evolution* come to mind here.)<sup>28</sup> Further, my mind as it emerges from the complexity of experience, continually modifies and develops itself. Correspondingly, I modify and develop my philosophical, theological and psychological points of view which interpenetrate each other.

Within our Western culture there is a sense that human beings are destined for a higher life. To be sure, the destiny of a higher life, or higher purpose in life, originates in this world, not outside of this world. Even so, as a philosophical concern this higher purpose has a theological dimension in my life-world. And as a theologian I can never complete my interpretive task. I need to perpetually embrace a philosophy that will suitably support the expression of my theological understanding of God's presence

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<sup>26</sup> William James (1842-1910) had a similar insight. Closing a lecture on philosophy he noted: "Let me close, then, by briefly enumerating what she *can* do for religion. If she will abandon metaphysics and deduction for criticism and induction, and frankly transform herself from theology into science of religions, she can make herself enormously useful" [James' italics] (James, 2002:469).

<sup>27</sup> Dewart (1966:44, n. 38).

<sup>28</sup> An insight he had was that in *emergent evolution* the human mind arises within physical matter that has attained a certain complexity of organization. This is not to say, however, that the complexity of physical matter *causes* the mind. Complexity enables the mind to appear.

within the *ecclesia* and within my life-world. Obtaining knowledge philosophically, through the activity of phenomenological human thinking, is a natural activity not to be confused with the act of faith. They are not identical, but related phenomena. No particular philosophy is required to qualify or express my faith. Although, with the papal encyclical *Humani Generis* of Pope Pius XII (1950), such a requirement was the case. Today, more than a few philosophers and theologians see the comment of Pope John Paul II in *Vetitatis Splendor*: "Certainly the Church's Magisterium does not intend to impose upon the faithful any particular theological system, still less a philosophical one," as an advancement in magisterial thinking.<sup>29</sup> All philosophy is certainly culturally contextualized, yet phenomenological philosophy does not conform to a given logistics of knowledge or fixed methodology. Phenomenology is a non-scholastic philosophical interpretation of experience. *Shadows in the Cave: A Phenomenological Approach to Literary Criticism Based on Hispanic Texts*, by Mario Valdés is an example of the flexibility of the phenomenological attitude.

Reflecting on the existential (ontological) situation in which I find myself, I readily recognize, as a critical thinker, that Christianity has no cosmology of its own. But, pagan religious traditions, unlike the Christian traditions, do have their sacred cosmological mythologies and legends which account for a particular understanding of their religious experience. Paganism has no fixed creed of belief. Nor does paganism have heroes, and public figures similar to Christian martyrs who give up their lives for a moral commandment. A revealed sense of the holy or sacred, as a prior condition for faith to be theologically interpreted, is required, however, as given in the three monotheistic traditions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This revealed sense is not found in pagan religious traditions.

The experience of an increasing number of Western theologians is that Christian theology suffers from a reliance on an outdated theoretical epistemology in interpreting the faith. They believe theology ought to undertake a contemporary philosophical

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<sup>29</sup> *Vetitatis Splendor* (1993, para. 29).

approach and subscribe to a philosophy of "being-becoming" as opposed to a philosophy of only "being." Phenomenology is a "being-becoming" philosophy.

Phenomenological philosophy does not re-present things but is capable of disclosing a dynamic "present presence" that realizes that which is divine in one's experience. In my phenomenological disclosure (or realization) of this presence, by which I mean God, I recognize the other as "not-me" and as an encounter with that which limits me. This new methodological attitude in my thinking requires deliberate cultivation. In thinking phenomenologically, I assign meaning to the concrete connections between myself and others. But these are not connections of a classical sort, but are relations of a posthuman sort that have religious significance for me. My connections have, in fact, become relationships.

I accept that a sufficient degree of organic complexity, through evolution (and without ascertaining the cause of this evolutionary complexity), has allowed my mind to appear which, in turn, allows me to demonstrate that I think consciously and purposefully. Thinking consciously and purposefully has led me to the awareness that God alone is not responsible for everything any more. I have a particular role in the philosophical interpretation of my experience. This particular role allows me to conceive myself as a co-responsible participant and co-creator agent in my culture and society. Given this status I am able to effectively work towards building the kingdom of God on earth which more faithfully discloses the presence of God. I ask, as a believer, philosopher and theologian, in what sense and with what consequences is God present to me? I must determine an answer philosophically and subsequently express it theologically. In the development of my Christian posthuman theism, God's presence to me is a matter of experiential fact, not one of metaphysical necessity. In short, God's presence to me is revealed, not out of necessity, but out of an unnecessary love for me, originating *a parte Dei*.

My human way of being, my identity, is constituted through my consciousness which signifies me uniquely to myself and to others. Thus, for me to be a subject, that is, an identifiable person, is also to be a particular object to others as well as myself. I do not

understand my objectivity to others as fixed in relation to an external other, a "not-me." My objectivity to others is a manifestation of my personality at any given stage of development in my evolution. As a person facing the future I consciously strive to evolve beyond my present personal identity. As a Christian, if I look at the world and interpret my experience through Hellenic eyes, I am obliged to look to the past and am confined to my present experience. In looking to the past as a Hellenist, I am required to accept the power of God *over* me. Thus, being focused on the past, I remain a creature with no opportunity to evolve to a co-creator status. However, phenomenologically understood through a dehellenized understanding, the God beyond me in whose presence I am does not have absolute power over me in any classical sense. Rather, God's power is *shared* with me as co-creator — me having been made in God's image and likeness.<sup>30</sup> The fundamental relation between God and me consists, not in a hierarchical relationship of power, but in the mutual presence of God and me in a conscious unity within creation wherein I participate in divine creativity. As I dehellenize my Christian theism my faith is reformulated and the meaning of religion is re-expressed in terms that do not imply God's absolute power over me, nor is any inordinate submission to God implied.

In late Modernity rapid technological advances have limited the opportunities for ecclesiastical influence in the lives of the faithful who live in a secular and Westernized culture. This alteration requires a corresponding philosophical change. The Internet is a case in point. With the advent of the Internet a new ideology (virtual reality), not merely a new technology, is in the process of being developed through the advance of techno-digital knowledge. At this point in its history the notion of the virtual community may seem to suggest a negative ideology that is potentially a threat to the person.<sup>31</sup> The Internet appears to be a de-

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<sup>30</sup> I mean "co-creator" in the sense of *homo faber* (man who makes from preexisting matter); not *homo creator* (man who makes from nothing).

<sup>31</sup> Adolfs (1966:85) notes this negative aspect occurring through secularization (not secularism). Secularization "is an ideology which leads us towards a 'better future' but which does not care to know whether man really has a destiny or not.

personalizing forum in the sense that it has no need for physical, that is, embodied contact among those who use it. In the Internet virtual community there is no possibility of an incarnation such as constitutes physical human relationships in the temporal world of experience. The virtual community is a simulated computerized version of existence, that presents many philosophical and theological challenges to understanding ourselves as incarnated individuals bound within time. To my mind, a non-incarnated, digital relationship, misconceived as authentic existence, cannot reflect any true human community or society since the simulation engineered by virtual decision-makers is not that of actual beings, but “avatars.” The inordinate and uncritical use of Internet technology may engender, as it were, incompetent, non-humanized, the un-incarnated entities known as avatars as representing the “absence” of the concrete human being. In short, secularization has imposed a new ideology upon us.

I wondered if posthuman techno-digital philosophy might provide a reliable methodology for the understanding of the future of theistic belief. I had been taught throughout my academic formation that a Christian humanism provided a reliable philosophical approach for past generations, however, it no longer does so. Science had been suggested to me as the better approach to answer my questions — science being but a different type of philosophy. Somewhat of late, however, I have re-focused my attention and abandoned pursuing scientific questions concerning theistic belief. To my mind, attempts at seeking to prove, through scientific efforts, that God exists are futile. In my experience, these attempts by science rooted in physical experience told me nothing of God. As I see it today, the task of the existential theologian is not to look for an opportunity to prove a doctrinal point or reconcile the tension between religion and science. Rather, the existential theologian’s task is to express and clarify, within a

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... The ideology of secular society therefore aims to deaden our deepest restlessness.” For a developed distinction between secularization and secularism the reader might consult the works of Gregory Baum (1923-2017).

posthuman philosophical understanding, the experience of faith in light of scripture and tradition, the two modes of revelation.

Initially, when undertaking philosophical contemplation, I found myself in an existential situation that I did not make or design but had inherited. I also knew that I could not stop the continual evolution of my contemplation. I am personally involved in its transformation, and the question has become to what degree will I influence that evolution. As a Western Christian, I live within that anxiety and tension which accompany the end of conventional humanism as I understood it. But within this tension, signaling the end of conventional humanism for me, I see indications of a new beginning leading to a new future. These indications are marked by the beginning of a philosophical dehellenization in my thinking. Such posthuman philosophical dehellenized thinking enables me to consciously create the future of my theistic belief. As a thinker, I have no unique philosophical system of my own, but rely on the perspectives of an identifiable community of thinkers. Thus, my philosophical contemplation arises within that community of thinkers, yet is subjectively undertaken.<sup>32</sup>

Looking optimistically to the future, a phenomenological theology (the attitude of a posthuman dehellenized philosophy of God) presents a perspective that may bring about an end to the antithesis between Rome and the Reformation. Thus, a new posthuman Christian outcome may be neither Roman nor Reformed. I find this an exciting philosophical and theological possibility. In light of this possibility I undertake in Part II a consideration of Leslie Dewart's concept of God through the literary convention of a fictitious interview. This fictitious interview investigates the capacity of contemporary theological thought (heralding posthuman thought?) to assume an autonomous

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<sup>32</sup> William James (2002:565) observes the same phenomenon from his philosophical perspective. "Originality cannot be expected in a field like this, where all the attitudes and tempers that are possible have been exhibited in literature long ago, and where any new writer can immediately be classed under a familiar head." James classified himself as a supernaturalist of the 'crasser type.'

philosophy, free from ecclesiastical regulation, as theology’s foundation within a Catholic context.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Poitier (2002:65).



## PART II

### A FICTITIOUS INTERVIEW WITH LESLIE DEWART <sup>34</sup>

#### Christian Theism and Contemporary Experience

##### *Prefatory note*

In 1966 Dewart published a book entitled, *The Future of Belief, Theism in a World Come of Age* containing philosophical ideas sufficiently revolutionary as to attract the attention of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. <sup>35</sup> That book has had a great influence on my thinking. Therefore, with the intent of following-up on an idea arising from our 2005 correspondence (reproduce in the appendix) I have crafted in this section of my book an imaginary interview with Leslie Dewart. My questions have been crafted to reflect his “answers” as they appeared in *The Future of Belief*. Naturally there is more to Dewart’s philosophy than has been addressed by me here. For a full appreciation of Dewart’s philosophy and development of ideas the reader will need to refer to the range of Dewart’s works. For my purposes in the interview below and in conformity with the literary convention of his day, I have left his vocabulary as it appears in the book. That is, I have not changed “man” to “humanity,” or made any similar alterations to meet contemporary literary conventions.

*Savage: The title of our first session, which sets the theme for all subsequent interviews is: “Christian Theism and Contemporary Experience,” following your own mind. I have some questions that I hope will disclose your thoughts and perspectives on theistic belief. Of course, we will limit our conversation to the contemporary understanding of the experience of those of us living*

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<sup>34</sup> This section is based upon content edited from *The Future of Belief*.

<sup>35</sup> As noted in *Contemporary Authors*, no condemnation was issued, but the Congregation asked Dewart not to authorize further editions of the book. He declined stating that “to have struck any such defensive posture would have implicitly granted the legitimacy of the Congregation as a tribunal at whose bar transgressions of the bounds of legitimate speculation may be tried.”

*in a Western Christian culture. What is the main problem, as you see it?*

Dewart: We perceive that there is a certain incongruity between Christianity and the contemporary world, but we frequently mis-conceptualize the precise nature of this lack of rapport.

*Given your notion of this "misconception," my first question is: since Christians preach the Word of God as revealed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and there are many hard sayings in his message which seem to discourage acceptance of it, does this account for that lack of rapport from your perspective?*

It is hardly an essentially proselytic or pastoral matter, least of all a problem in public relations. In its ultimate import the problem does involve the self-communicating nature, eschatological aspirations and the missionary objectives of a faith which not unfittingly calls itself Universalism. But to suppose that the question of integrating Christian theism with contemporary experience is one of message-communication, how to convey the meaning of Christianity to a world whose ordinary human life renders it refractory to conversion, this would not only miss the real difficulty but would also include several assumptions contrary to fact.

*Can you give me an example of an assumption contrary to fact?*

It is not certain, for instance, that the mission of the Church can be properly described in terms of conveying an idea to those outside it. Christianity has a mission, not a message. The Gospel is not the textbook of the Christian faith. As news it is the report of an event that happens. But what it communicates is its reality and existence, not an idea.

*When I hear you say "reality and existence" I think of the contributions of science to contemporary culture. Yet religion and science seem to be in conflict. Could science ultimately be mistaken?*

It is not readily apparent that science, however proud and rebellious, is a radically mistaken mode of perception of the reality of man and world. Contemporary experience should not be identified with the non-Christian, non-believing experience of those who are outside the Church, implying the assumption that the disintegration of contemporary experience and Christian faith is, up to a point, the normal and natural state of affairs. What we really mean if we thus construe the project of integrating Christian belief and the everyday world, is that we hope that non-believing modern man will eventually cease experiencing himself and reality as he does, and that he will replace his contemporary experience with Christian belief.

*As I understand G. Lowes Dickinson, the separation of belief and the experiences of the everyday world actually began in ancient Greece. The pagan philosophers Anaxagoras and Socrates were indicted as atheists in their day.<sup>36</sup> Concerning the non-believing modern man, you say, "cease experiencing himself and reality as he does." What is the alternative you have in mind to man's present non-believing mode of experiencing himself?*

Contemporary experience should rather be understood as the mode of consciousness which mankind, has reached as a result of its historical and evolutionary development. To suppose that mankind could voluntarily renounce its history, its normal development and its growth in self- and world-understanding would show an unrealistic and misguided lack of appreciation of the nature of man, if not also of that of the Christian faith.

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<sup>36</sup> Dickinson (1932:56).

*I am sure we will probe into the understanding of the nature of humanity and the nature of the faith as we plod through with our interviews. From my research, experience is a key concept in your understanding. Are you thinking only of the Catholic tradition in the integration of the faith and experience?*

The project of integrating faith and experience is at least as relevant to the contemporary experience of Christians as to the experience of non-believers. In fact, if the solution to the problem should turn out to be useful towards the fulfillment of the missionary eschatological goals of the Catholic faith, the contemporary experience of Christian man automatically would integrate Christianity, at least in principle, with the experience of any contemporary man. Proselytic endeavors must be subordinated to the wider, theoretical question of the integration of Christian belief with the contemporary state of human development.

*But Catholics have the truth, do they not? Yet, the present state of human development seems to be leading away from this Christian understanding, no?*

Regardless of what we may feel, we all observe that the fairly total and serene self-assurance which had long characterized the consciousness of the Catholic believer, has been shaken in recent years. We note that there is unrest, unease and a frequently undefinable dissatisfaction, among the faithful and the clergy. And though bishops do not often disclose to the Church as a whole what their everyday consciousness reveals, there are indirect signs that they too, though perhaps in a different way and for different reasons, experience uncertainties, limitations and inadequacies to a degree which they are not by tradition accustomed to suffer.

*Are you saying that the clergy experience the Church in one way and the laity experience it in another? If so, is there no unity of mind among clergy and people regarding development of the faith?*

Catholic opinion is polarized into those who are exhilarated by the prospect of change and those who are fearful of it. That is, into those for whom it is a primary concern that the faith of the people should not be "disturbed" and those who argue that the welfare of the Church, if not the conversion of the world, requires radical innovations and possibly dramatic readjustments. To be sure, no given position on any given subject marks anyone with one type of mentality or with another. It does not necessarily reveal one sort of attitude or the other but that if one faces each issue with an independent enquiring mind, with intellectual autonomy and honesty, and on the matter's own merits, a proper and legitimate random divergence of conclusions is likely to emerge. Whatever the reason, it is possible to estimate, not only that beyond liberal and conservative positions there are liberal and conservative attitudes, but also that these alternative modes of thinking correlate highly with a Catholic's degree of acquaintance with, participation in, and acceptance of, the contemporary modality of human experience. For these two ways of thinking manifest fundamental differences in one's most basic orientation towards the problem of the relation of the Catholic faith to the contemporary and, indeed, to any given stage of human development.

*So, you are suggesting that an independent enquiring mind leads to a plurality of ideas as one stage in evolutionary development. This plurality of ideas is expressed as liberal or conservative, and is embedded in Catholic teaching, yet transcends it. That being the case, how do these contrasting attitudes affect our understanding of God?*

We have to do here with divergent orientations towards the meaning of the Christian faith, towards the meaning of religion itself, and therefore towards the Catholic's very understanding of his self-disposition towards God. Ultimately, we may have to do with divergent conceptualizations of the God of Christian belief. They would be mistaken who thought that the post-Vatican II critical period of the Catholic Church, hardly more than the first episode of which, probably, is behind us and can be accounted for

in terms of what Pope John and the Council wrought, or loosed upon the Church, depending on one's viewpoint.<sup>37</sup> What we are witnessing today might be more accurately envisaged as a resolution of the very problem of which the Reformation was an unfortunately abortive issue, namely, the integration of Christian belief with the post-medieval stage of human development.

*We live in a scientific age which is characteristic of the post-medieval stage of human development. Do you see any particular difficulties between science and religion traceable to the apparent tension between the two?*

The contemporary experience includes respect for science, largely because of science's diffidence and its readiness to change its mind, whereas contemporary man's enthusiasm for self-assurance of much Catholic philosophical thinking is under much stricter control. But if the problem is not, on the one hand, the incorporation into belief of the trappings of modern civilization, neither is it, on the other, the integration of Christian belief with that specialized function of modern life which we call science. It would make no sense to condition Christian belief upon the findings of science. It is not science, an extra- or super-human reality, that creates modern man. On the contrary, it is modern man that creates science. To be precise, modern man creates himself by means of science, that is, by means of his scientific mode of consciousness, that it is scientific culture that defines contemporary man. What counts is the human reality, the human experience and self-understanding, which produce the scientific method and scientific world-views, an experience and self-understanding which are then reciprocally molded by man's own scientific and other cultural creations, even if only a fraction of the

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<sup>37</sup> [Editor's note] Robert Adolfs (1966:9) wrote: "Essentially, the Council was little more than a professional discussion between administrators of the Church, but popular imagination turned it into a spiritual rebirth of the Church. History, however, has shown that spiritual rebirths simply do not take place at Councils."

population has more than an elementary acquaintance with science. It is not on science as such, but on the contemporary cultural stage of human self-consciousness, typically manifested in and conditioned by science and technology, that the traditional Christian faith grates.

*So, the problem is not between the methods of science and the interpretative philosophy of religion as being in conflict. It is more proper to locate the conflict in the human person at a particular stage of conscious experience. However, is not secularism the true "locus" of the problem?*

We might mistake it for the problem of the Church and the modern world, meaning the problem of reconciling the holy and the secular enterprises of man. That is, God's religion and man's political organization, man's social life, man's economic existence, man's technological world. The objection to this is not only that the opposition between theistic faith and everyday experience is not an opposition between the human and the divine, but also that the outward novelties and the secular changes that make up the contemporary world are but manifestations of a profound change in the mode and nature of human experience.

*Unless I am mistaken, Dickinson, in his perspective of ancient Greek life also saw a change in the nature and mode of human experience. I quote. "The quarrel of the philosopher with the myths is not that they are not true, but that they are not edifying. Clearly, concludes the philosopher, our current legends need revision; in the interest of religion itself we must destroy the myths of the popular creed." <sup>38</sup> Are the changes in the manner and experience of these "outward novelties," as you call them, not sufficient for the individual believer to continue to believe in God? Must the creed be destroyed in favour of an edifying scientific attitude?*

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<sup>38</sup> Dickinson (1932:50/51).

The deeper question concerns an issue at once more fundamental and more comprehensive, namely, the meaningfulness of Christian belief for the experience and self-understanding of man in a modern, industrial, technological society. For the experience and the self-concept of modern man do not merely fail to accord with institutional Christianity, they appear to conflict with Christianity's most basic doctrines and, in the first place, with belief in God.

*Is to live in accord with institutional Christianity and to believe in God, not a moral requirement for Catholics? In other words, "extra ecclesiam, nulla salus," that is, no salvation outside the church.*

The far greater majority of men in the West have opted for the rejection (also, to be sure, in varying degrees) of the realism, if not also the moral validity, of institutional religion. Retaining an integrally contemporary experience, they have fashioned for themselves (if they have not drifted into religious indifference or discovered the religions of atheism) a vague religious sentiment more or less distantly affiliated to the traditional Christian belief to which, from the point of view of the history of culture, they continue to belong.

*Does this "vague religious sentiment" you identify replace the traditional notion of theism as the new belief in God?*

The trouble with religious theism is that, having once had an important, in fact, necessary role in human development, and having once usefully served man as a means of coping with utterly real perplexities, it has perpetuated itself beyond his needs. With increased self-consciousness and increased mastery of the world, religious theism, to be sure, is highly imperfect. Man can devise more adequate means than religion to grapple with the same problems. Science is, of course, the principal, though by no means the only, such means.



*So, what is believed in by contemporary humanity may differ from traditional belief in God by the Church proper. Yet, humanity's beliefs have been the necessary products of human development. This leads me to shift the focus of religious belief to that of religious illusion. Since Freud's "Future of an Illusion," which appeared in 1927, do you see a bright future for religious belief in God? And, if so, do you see Freud's contribution to philosophy in this area as truly significant?*

In common with every other scientific humanist, Freud hoped that mankind might one day rise above this view of life. He looked forward to the future when mature man should find it possible to do without the consolation of the religious illusion in order to endure the troubles of life, the cruelty of reality. For, in his argument Freud retained certain questionable presuppositions which do not invalidate his argument altogether, but which once exorcised require one to transpose his conclusions into a key that does not readily harmonize with scientific humanism. To believe, for example, that the scientific *Weltanschauung* <sup>39</sup> required the confession that man is no longer the centre of creation, was to assume a relatively primitive and gross, indeed an inadequate and quasi-geometrical, criterion of the centrality of man's position in the universe. With the greater self-confidence provided by his superior cultural equipment, Freud went beyond primitive man in proposing that fear should be overcome. But he did not appear to doubt that reality is truly frightening. He shared the primitive view that the apprehension of reality should normally elicit concern for one's safety. Like primitive man, according to Freud, contemporary man is bound by the nature of reality to experience helplessness when faced with the cruelty of the world. He proposed that modern man should react differently to what he assumed to be the same situation in which both primitive and contemporary man find themselves by nature. And yet, it may be that the possibilities open to man are much wider than Freud

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<sup>39</sup> A particular philosophy or view of life; the world view of an individual or group.

suspected. It may be that man's reaction should be different, but only because his situation is not the same. For it may be that to a mankind come of age the world should no longer appear hostile, but simply stimulating and challenging. The insecurity which Freud took to be natural to man may well be proper to only a passing stage of human evolution. Man may not be naturally alienated.

*I find it interesting that in the opening chapter of his book Dickinson remarks from a philosophical, not psychological point of view: "Man, in short, by his religion has been made at home in the world and that is the first point to seize upon." <sup>40</sup> Thus, the cosmos is something familiar to man. But remaining within a psychological perspective, my past, present and future, as I understand them, form a continuum that, so far, confirms Freud's view of alienation. I look to correct in the present moment my mistakes of the past in order to be happy in the future. Theologically, in other words, I seek to have my sins forgiven.*

There is indeed much evidence for the view that when Freud wrote that the intention that man should be happy is not included in the scheme of Creation, he did not merely mean that man is not assured of self-fulfillment and perfection by nature but must instead creatively fulfill himself. He seems, rather, to have been harking back to a dominant theme of Greek philosophy, to which he owed so much in so many other respects, that man, against whom, as Hippocrates said, "all things conspire," is destined by fatal cosmic forces to suffer tragic distress.

*From a philosophical point of view, I tend to agree with Hippocrates. My experience is that the world is often against me and that life is a burden. I hope for a better life in heaven. Do you not find this to be a legitimate aspiration?*

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<sup>40</sup> Dickinson (1932:4)

It is not out of the question to doubt that the large legacy of pessimism we have inherited from Greece must be an essential part of human nature. If reality is experienced as reality, if the world is envisaged as man's home, and if the purposiveness of conscious existence is conceived as being and not as being happy, the future forecast by Freud for the religious illusion might well come true, but in the form of a further development of Christian theism, not in that of its disappearance. Freud's thesis cannot be invoked in order to do away with the legitimacy of religious preoccupation. In the end it is the pastor who has to dissolve the inconsistencies and liquidate the mystifications of theologians and philosophers. The Catholic clergy have generally attempted but to convey to the faithful, as best they could, the mind of the Church.

*It seems to me that your comment about a change of form for Christian theism as an outcome of Freud's contribution, which has been prefigured by Dickinson, is similar to the pastor's work in relation to the scientific attitude. Let me quote a short paragraph from Dickinson. "The beauty, singleness, and the freedom which attracts us in the consciousness of the Greek was the poetical view of the world, which did but anticipate in imagination an ideal that was not realized in fact or in thought. It depended on the assumption of anthropomorphic gods, an assumption which could not stand before the criticism of reason, and either broke down into skepticism, or was developed into the conception of a single supreme and spiritual power." <sup>41</sup> In light of Dickinson's remark, do you think that the faithful need pastor-philosophers to interpret "the mind of the Church" for them, lest they fall into Freud's view?*

The difficulty is that ever since Christian morality began to be conceptualized, to use St. Thomas's own language, in terms of the performance of certain acts which constituted the means whereby happiness is to be gained, in other words, ever since it began to be

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<sup>41</sup> Dickinson (1932:67).

cast in the hellenic concepts of means to the attainment of a final end, it has been difficult to preach Christianity without fostering the illusion described by Freud.

*Again, if I may reference Dickinson, the ancient Greek "lived and acted undisturbed by scrupulous introspection; and the function of his religion was rather to quiet the conscience by ritual than to excite it by admonition and reproof." <sup>42</sup> But in our psychologically dominated age how do we overcome Freud's illusion, and the need for "admonition and reproof?" Is anyone to blame for it?*

Not even Freud sought to blame anyone for the religious illusion. But we might go beyond Freud and insist that it was not only healthy, but also proper and good, under concrete historical and cultural conditions for Christian theism to have taken the illusory forms it has. No one need, or indeed should, regret having lived a younger life, no one need be ashamed if when he was a child he spoke as a child. But, if not with Freud, then with another Jew whom Freud admired [Ernest Jones] we might agree that once we admit to ourselves that we are no longer children, the time has come to put away the things of a child.

*Moving beyond Freud, do you have any thoughts about contemporary theology, one that is freed from the limitations and isolation of the seminary curriculum and the concept of God? <sup>43</sup>*

The direct treatment of the problem of everyday experience and Christian belief in God has been relatively neglected, even if it is amply recognized that we unquestionably do need a re-statement of what God is all about. The time has come for Christian thought

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<sup>42</sup> Dickinson (1932:66).

<sup>43</sup> [Cf. Adolfs (1966:138)] "One very important task of the clergy in the future will therefore be to make the laity conscious of its call to service as the People of God within the structures of secular society. ... We shall indeed see a completely different form of theology arise when the teaching of theology is freed from the limitations and the isolation of the environment of the seminary."

to apply itself, within its more general plan to integrate experience and faith, to the problem of the concept of God. The problem of integrating theism and modern life requires, therefore, a theoretical justification, in the light of a commitment to the truth of Christianity, of the attempt to integrate it with contemporary experience, in other words, a theory of dogmatic development.

*The suggestion of a theory of dogmatic development seems to me to advocate exploring new ground in light of the traditional teaching on the concept of dogma. Yet, the dogmas of the church concerning God's transcendent reality as revealed truth do not change, as I understand it.*

However ultimate and transcendent God's reality, if he is a reality, must be conceived as being. And insofar as God's principal and original relation to man is that of creator to creature, God must be conceived as the being who is the cause of being. The idea is that reality as such is properly, necessarily and exclusively conceivable as being, or otherwise not at all. The suggestion that the integration of Christian belief and contemporary experience, especially in what concerns the concept of God, could not be successfully attempted by a Christian theology, should be put positively. The integration of faith and experience might be successfully undertaken, particularly with regard to the central dogmatic theism of the Catholic faith, in the light of philosophical principles which in their totality corresponded to the contemporary level of human self-consciousness. It must radically depart from the philosophic world-viewing which has given the traditional Christian faith in God a cultural form which no longer serves well that Christian faith. My suggestion is that it is precisely at this level that a Christian philosophy could usefully intervene in Christian theological speculation.

*Regarding contemporary scientific speculation, the work of Teilhard de Chardin comes to mind, especially his "Divine Milieu" and "Phenomenon of Man." Both books attempt to*

*integrate evolutionary, or scientific thought with theology. Any comments on Teilhard's approach?*

Teilhard's thought was not an apologetic endeavor to harmonize science and the traditional conceptualizations of the Christian faith. It was a creative attempt to follow through to its ultimate consequences a scientific and fully contemporary experience in the light of a Christian faith which, on the one hand, functioned to make that scientific experience religiously meaningful, but which, on the other, required re-interpretation and reconceptualization in the categories of contemporary experience for the very sake of illuminating that everyday scientific experience.

*As I understand Teilhard, evolution has an end point, a final goal. Do you agree?*

There are several passages in Teilhard that only with great difficulty, if at all, could escape the objection that in his doctrine the evolutionary processes lead necessarily and inevitably to a final, that is, Omega point of history. For Teilhard occasionally equated intelligibility and necessity, and a Christian can do so only as long as he does not believe in evolution. Teilhard was needlessly betrayed by an uncharacteristic reversion to a hellenic idea that development must be reducible to becoming, therefore, in things which develop the actual is intelligible only in relation to the possible. If so, there is at bottom *nihil novum sub sole*.<sup>44</sup> That which results from evolution must be found in potency in that from which it evolves. More precisely, in this philosophical tradition potency is essentially relative to act and is for the sake of act, *potentia dicitur ad actum*. Potency is, therefore, intelligible in relation to act.<sup>45</sup> Though this aspect of Teilhard's thought is

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<sup>44</sup> nothing new under the sun.

<sup>45</sup> The full philosophical axiom is: *Potentia dicitur ad actum et specificatur ab objecto*. Translation: There is no third way, there can be no middle between being and nonbeing.

probably not central or decisive or definitive part of the spirit of his doctrine, there can be little doubt that Teilhardism is philosophically weak. But this does not mean it should be rejected. It means that the present moment of the history of the Church offers to the Catholic intellect the task of providing a rigorous philosophical foundation for such Christian visions as that which was inspired in Teilhard de Chardin by scientific experience.

*Teilhardism is philosophically weak you say. Is such a philosophical weakness evident throughout contemporary Catholic theology?*

Perhaps the same point should be made rather more generally, in terms of certain significant differences, surely not surprising, between the typical difficulties with Catholic and Protestant attempts, respectively, to integrate theology and exegesis with contemporary experience. The differences are, as it so happens, related to their typically divergent traditional attitudes towards philosophy. Speaking very generally, it can be said that Protestant thought is not well disposed towards philosophy. The traditional Protestant tendency to rely on Scripture alone predisposes it towards this attitude, which is confirmed by its original aversion to Scholastic rationalism. Catholic thought, on the other hand, has always recognized amply the indispensable role of philosophy in theological speculation. But in this context philosophy has to date continued to mean predominantly an obsolete mode of thought. Radical Protestant theology has been characterized by a variation of the same idea of dogmatic theology. It has tended to become the understanding of Scripture in the light of contemporary knowledge, and in particular science, history or modern philosophy. Understanding the New Testament as a document which under rigorous scientific examination can reveal its original cultural and historical meaning, has led us to a deeper appreciation of the total humanity of Jesus and to an eye-opening assessment of the cultural and historical origins of the Christian faith.

*This is true in the West, I believe, but, something similar has occurred in the East regarding Orthodox theology. It has traditionally developed without a classical philosophical support structure. But, further discussion on this would take us away from our present concern. So, to stay on topic the question is: given the "deeper appreciation of the total humanity of Jesus" arising from Protestant scientific examination, in light of Catholic philosophical interpretation where do you see the weakness?*

The contemporary philosophical understanding of human nature could in turn help much, but if, at the same time, in the absence of ready-made concepts of God which can be plundered from the classical sources of phenomenology and existentialism, God remains understood in the traditional way "of all centuries," say, as the Supreme Being, the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is apt to become, if not totally impossible, so obscure as to be next to meaningless. In this approach, the integration of experience and faith has sometimes meant only the rhetorical and figurative re-interpretation of the traditional doctrine.

*It seems to me that a rhetorical and figurative re-interpretation might return us to Freud's perspective. To advance beyond his perspective, is not more required of the Christian philosophical understanding of God?*

More concretely, I suggest that the integration of theism with today's everyday experience requires not merely the demythologization of Scripture but the more comprehensive dehellenization of dogma, and specifically that of the Christian doctrine of God. Of course, this task is of such magnitude that I wish to reiterate what I mentioned earlier I am merely sketching the proposal in broad outline in order to try it on the touch-stone of public examination. Dehellenization is the negative way of expressing this idea. It is the logical term to use for it if, astride the present, *before* we proceed forward, we take stock of where we have come from and where we have been. But we look to our hellenic past in order to transcend the ambivalent present. This



transcending of the present is dehellenization insofar as the present is out-of-the-past. For this reason, it is more difficult to find the logical name for that which dehellenization *positively* seeks to bring about.

*From a philosophical perspective it appears that you are attempting to turn a negative term into a positive one to describe the future understanding of dehellenized Christian belief.*

It is difficult to know what the future might look like as a result of the transcendence of the present, and as long as dehellenization is a project of the present, the future has not yet come about. On the day when we can call dehellenization by its correct present designation, as having transcended the past, the problem will be how to transcend it, whatever it might be called. Nonetheless, on the basis, not of what it might positively look like in the future, but of what its positive function at present already suggests, dehellenization may well be described, without a negative reference to the past, as the conscious historical self-fashioning of the cultural form which Christianity requires now for the sake of its future. In other words, dehellenization means, in positive terms, the conscious creation of the future of belief.

*So, do we create a new image of God, then? A new theism, as it were?*

Theism in a world come of age must itself be a theism come of age. There is, of course, nothing unusual, mistaken or shameful in the implication that theistic belief should have once been infantile. There might well be, however, something unreasoning, to say the least, in a theistic belief that willfully and consciously chose to remain forever out of phase with the maturity of human experience at any given stage.

*In our present Western Christian culture many people do not believe in God. For those who do, what do you think is the greatest paradox concerning their belief in God?*

Does not the very existence of atheism in the midst of a culture which is historically theistic, a culture which, despite its apostasy remains culturally and anthropologically describable in no other terms than Western Christendom, tell us something about the nature of Christian theism? Had modern atheism been imported from abroad the case might be different. But it happens to be a historical fact that our atheism is indigenous. We devised it ourselves, strictly out of our own cultural resources. Evidently, modern atheism is the atheism of the Christian world.

*Are you able to account for this "atheism in the Christian world?" If so, where do you begin?*

We should begin with a commonly accepted distinction, first made by Henri de Lubac and subsequently widely reproduced, between atheism, in the strict sense of the word, and antitheism, or, more precisely, antichristianism. The denial of the existence of God as an actuality requires the admission of the existence of God as at least a logical possibility, not necessarily, of course, as a real one. For the anti-theist God is, if nothing else, thinkable. For the atheist he is not. It is a negative existential judgment concerning an object of thought, God, who is, therefore, at least by implication, allowed the status of a logically possible, conceivable reality. This is important, because from its negative character it follows that atheism as such is not actually the absolutely first metaphysical principle. As a negation of a certain existence it rests upon a prior affirmation of another existence. This other existence is not far to seek. It is the existence of man. The denial of God is the logical consequence of the affirmation of man. The existence of man is held to be scientifically, psychologically, logically, physically, metaphysically and, above all, morally undeniable.

*If I follow through on your thought and affirm my humanity then, does that mean I eventually will come not to believe in God? That I will no longer need religion?*

In finding either the absence or the presence of God we have to do with a fundamental mode of self- and world-consciousness which is concretized in a radical resolve, that is, in a commitment of oneself, to a certain projected existence. One has to decide both whether to believe and whether to dis-believe. By religion I mean here a mere phenomenological and cultural fact, namely, some sort of fundamental attitude towards totality and resolve towards existence, regardless of the specific content of that attitude. For, as Michael Novak notes, the decision to believe, made with authenticity, appears to have roots other than emotional weakness or monistic prepossessions. The decision to believe springs from a decision about what in human experience is to be taken as the criterion of the real. As each man is, so will he decide what is most real in human experience. According to that decision, he will shape his own identity. But, of course, the same is true of the decision to dis-believe, because, again from Novak's perspective, the serious nonbeliever and the serious believer share a hidden unity of spirit.

*So, both the believer and non-believer are religious, each in his or her own way.*

When both do all they can to be faithful to their understanding and to love, and to the immediate task of diminishing the amount of suffering in the world, the intention of their lives is similar, even though their conceptions of what they are doing are different. Christian belief in God is nevertheless an act of existential self-relation to ultimate reality. We have to do with the order of ultimate self-commitment, ultimate self-disposition towards reality. In either case we have to do with faith. For although the inexistence, just like the existence, of God may well be reasonable, the inexistence, just like the existence, of God is inevident. From this antithesis we may draw, not the skeptical conclusion that no one can decide whether to believe, or dis-believe, that God exists, but we may observe the verifiable fact that no one, unless he deceives himself, can find "reasonable proofs" remotely sufficient to necessitate a personal commitment to existence.

*Are you saying that although reason cannot prove God's existence, I must have faith that God exists?*

I interpret the teaching of Vatican I concerning the demonstrability of God's existence as relative to its preoccupation with fideism. Even among Thomists very few have drawn the idea that in point of fact any demonstration can actually replace the Christian's act of faith in God, though some have actually drawn it. Faith is a commitment of one's existential self in the light of a certain apprehension of reality as disclosed in lived experience. For faith is always coming-into-being, it is never quite fully faithful, it is always on the way, hence never perfect and achieved. And if faith is a mode of existence then Christian theism is a way of life.

*How do you understand faith?*

Faith is the existential response of the self to the openness of the transcendence disclosed by conscious experience. It is our decision to respect, to let be, the contingency of our being, and, therefore, to admit into our calculations a reality beyond the totality of being. For the reality of Christian belief is distorted if we understand the "act" of faith as a discrete operation. It is no less a coming-into-being than the act of existence which is, likewise, a perpetual achieving of the unachieved. In real life we find not the act, but the life of faith. We cannot believe in God once-for-all any more than we can exist once-for-all. To the degree that we cease believing and presume to rest on our belief we are likely to become unfaithful to our faith. We are apt to arrest the development of our religious life.

*Does such arrested development of the religious life imply idolatry?*

The Christian faith must be, under pain of idolatry, painstakingly self-critical. The Christian tradition, which God we believe in is of the utmost importance and the Christian faith requires us, under pain of infidelity, to profess atheism in relation

to every false God. This means that the Christian faith is both belief and dis-belief. It requires conscious separation of that in which we must, from that in which we must not, believe.

*In light of the foregoing it appears that I cannot rely on a scholastic understanding of the faith to help me decide what not to believe.*

The Scholastic distinction between supernatural and natural faith is not highly relevant to contemporary life. But despite its faulty conceptualization, which weds it to an antiquated philosophy of man, it corresponds to a vital reality of Christian life, namely, that the Christian belief in God is quite unlike faith in anything or anyone else. This is manifested in the fact that belief in God does not settle anything about human life. In fact, to the degree that it rules one's life faith is, if anything, unsettling.

*I can appreciate that belief in God is unsettling. But, is it not the case that an unsettling life may prompt me to avoid or even deny God's reality?*

Christianity enjoys the doubtful distinction of being the only higher religion to have become preoccupied with the existence of God to the extent of having neglected his reality. That it so neglected it is the true meaning of the defection of the working class, the secularization of the culture and the apostasy of science, and it is evident from the history of the Church's attitude to social, political and scientific questions. Christianity indeed is the only religion to have generated religious atheism within itself. A genuine and lived concern with truth means a hypothetical willingness to disbelieve should the truth require one to do so. And yet, the Christian, evidently, must not so dishonestly or pragmatically believe that he would stand ready to continue believing even if he should no longer experience his belief as true.

*When you describe the situation this way I am reminded of the phrase, "my country; right or wrong — and don't try to change my mind."*

Could the believer wish that if his belief were false he should never find out? This would be believing for the sake of believing or for the sake of whatever consequences, other than truth-belief may bring. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, on the contrary, the steady purification of the concept of God has increasingly facilitated the emergence of that peculiar disbelief which, being born of the same religious experience as belief, can fairly be called, in contradistinction to the atheism born of inconsiderateness, un-reflectiveness, inexperience, or sheer obstinacy in refusing to admit the possibility of God, religious atheism. From the relative nature of Christian theism follows its aptitude for development, readjustment and cultural polymorphism. It is not given once for all. It is, therefore, dynamic, evolving and self-transforming. But how could Christian theism be all these things and nevertheless true? That is, how could it be these things and yet remain, both originally and ever, a true doctrine of the Christian faith? The answer depends on whether a theory of the development of Christian doctrine could reconcile these apparently contradictory, mutually exclusive qualities of Christian belief.

*We will pursue your thoughts of the development of Christian doctrine in our next segment.*

## The Development of Christian Theism

*I would like us now to turn our attention, in this segment, to the development of Christian dogma that you introduced in the previous discussion. Is there a documented history to the development of dogma in the Church?*

It is interesting to note that Catholic theology has only gradually become aware of the fact that dogma develops. St. Thomas was aware that the articles of faith have increased in the course of time. But this hardly constituted a true development of what is believed. The sense is, however, that the dogma itself does not in any real sense change, although its articulation becomes more complex. When Bossuet <sup>46</sup> in the seventeenth century contrasted the immutability of Catholic doctrine with Protestant variability, he may have been emphasizing an aspect of the Thomistic doctrine in which St. Thomas took little interest, but he was hardly departing from the common position of mediaeval theology.

*Medieval theology notwithstanding, what is the situation today?*

The gradual conviction has arisen that Christian dogma must be said in some real sense to develop and, indeed, to have been developing since earliest time. I underscore this: the fact of which we have recently become aware is not that Christian doctrine has begun to develop in recent times, but that it has always existed in a process of development. It is only the awareness of this fact that is new.

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<sup>46</sup> Court preacher to Louis XIV of France, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704) was a strong advocate of political absolutism and the divine right of kings. He argued that government was divine and that kings received their power from God.

*Is Christianity the only religion to experience this "Johnny come lately" awareness of its historical development?*

The post-facto awareness of one's development is not peculiar to Christianity. It is a property of human nature. It can be no coincidence that Christianity reached this awareness concerning itself at the same time that mankind reached the same awareness of its own historicity and its evolutionary nature in every other respect. As man has become historically minded, man has found the understanding of his past history indispensable for the understanding of his present reality and for the adequacy of his self-projection into the future. Religious experience follows the same rules as all human experience. Christianity's awareness of the fact that it develops historically must in some sense find its explanation in the nature of human consciousness.

*To me consciousness is a psychological term. But you seem to be using it philosophically.*

Indeed, consciousness is understood as the typical and proper form of human psychism, of human existence and life. But in the understanding of recent philosophical thought, man's psychic life, however, exhibits a peculiar character which animals do not appear even in part to share. For man is the being who is present to himself. This presence of his being present to himself is called consciousness. Both man and animal *know*. The difference transcends the order of mere knowledge altogether.

*When Socrates said, "know thyself," could he have meant to be conscious of yourself? In other words, can consciousness be equated with knowledge, or are they different?*

The typical form of human development can only be an increase in consciousness. Its distinctiveness over learning properly so called is that it cannot take the form of a quantitative increase. Man can develop in this way, that is, he can learn, since he can know, in the sense that consciousness virtually contains



knowledge. But this is not what defines his human development. The heightening of consciousness presupposes a genuine but more primitive consciousness. Present consciousness can only grow out of it, and it is meaningful only in relation to it. The understanding of man's psychic life in terms of consciousness, rather than knowledge, creates the possibility of understanding the truth of the Christian faith in such a way as would not only permit true development to occur, but indeed as requiring it by its very nature as truth. Insofar as it pertains to mutable things, truth requires constancy of proportion rather than strict immutability.

*"Constancy of proportion" to use your words, applied to truth suggests to me that the truth is relative and changes according to circumstances. In short, what may be true for me may not be true for you. I was taught, in the scholastic tradition, that truth being eternal does not change.*

The scholastic tradition may well be one source of the fairly common assumption that the notion of Christian truth as eternal and immutable is an integral part of the Christian faith. But this scarcely compels one to conclude that to diverge from the Scholastic conception of truth is to diverge from the truth of faith. Since there is, so far as I understand the matter, no revealed Christian theory of truth, any theory of truth used or assumed by Christian teaching or speculation must run the same risks and be subject to the same development as, say, a cosmological or anthropological theory used or assumed by them.

*Are you suggesting the possibility of new truths arising in the faith from philosophical development?*

In the absence of new revelation after the close of the New Testament era, the faith of Christianity cannot teach any new truths. In the past, of course, as God's revelation took place over a long period of time, new truths, the Trinity, the Incarnation, were revealed and taught, pre-eminently by Christianity in relation to Judaism. In this connection it may be pertinent to recall that the

Reformation's anti-Roman character was rendered possible by the Reformers' assumption of basically the same idea concerning the fixity of Christian doctrine. But assuming also the premise that the contemporary Church, under the Roman pontificate, had substantially changed the original sense, the Reformers had to conclude that Christianity had been corrupted, and that the Christian faith must regain its original primitive sense. It would be unfortunate if, as more and more Catholics find it impossible to reconcile the historicity of human nature with Proposition 62 of *Lamentabili*,<sup>47</sup> they should draw a conclusion paradoxically similar to that of the Reformers, and look backwards to the original purity of traditional Christianity instead of forward to the demands of the future.

*A moment ago, you spoke of the absence of new revelation after the close of the New Testament era. Can you elaborate a bit on this?*

I mean that revelation has not ended and indeed never shall as long as God continues to deal personally with man and be present to human history. For we should not suppose that the fullness of God's self-revelation in Jesus means that God's self-revelation ceased at a certain point in time, after which we no longer enjoy the revealing presence of God, but only the record of the revelation completed in the past. To think in new concepts is to develop one's original experience. On this basis it may be possible to suggest the outline of a theory of the mechanism of dogmatic development in which the very preservation of the original truth of Christianity would not merely permit, but actually require, the ceaseless re-conceptualization of Christian belief.

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<sup>47</sup> Proposition 62 condemned the belief that "the chief articles of the Apostles' Creed did not have the same sense for the Christians of the first ages as they have for the Christians of our time." The syllabus (1907) does not use the term *modernist*, but it was regarded as part of the campaign of Pope Pius X against Modernism in general, and philosophical evolution in particular.

*How might a theory of "the mechanism of dogmatic development" be different from traditional concepts?*

Such a theory would rest on the distinction between the experience and the conceptualization of faith. The conceptualization of faith is a process by which we render ourselves present to that-in-which-we-believe. This does not mean that concepts perform the function of mediating the mind's assimilation of reality. The concepts which articulate and express the Christian faith do not render us present to that-in-which-we-believe by virtue of their alleged representational value. They are not similitudes of their object. Like all other concepts, the concepts of Christian belief are not true because of their effectiveness in representing objects. They are true because of their effectiveness in relating, by relation of truth, man's reality to the reality of that-in-which-he-believes. It would be better to say that the concept is true to the degree that by its elevation of experience to consciousness. It permits the truth of human experience to come into being.

*If I have understood you correctly, up to this point, concepts which have been re-interpreted in light of contemporary experience, developed a new purpose within and for consciousness; concepts are not simply a re-working of previous ideas.*

[The re-interpretation of ideas] can be properly called an evolution of concepts because the emergent form cannot be reduced to the act of the potentiality of the original form of the concept. And since the conceptual form of the experience of faith does not determine what is revealed, it also follows that the cultural transformation of the Christian faith and the development of its truth do not imply either the discovery of a new, different truth which it did not previously possess, or the betrayal of the truth that it previously possessed. What it does imply, however, is that truth is no longer the *adaequatio rei et intellectus*.<sup>48</sup> But truth

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<sup>48</sup> correspondence of the thing and the intellect.

remains, and this truth that remains is living and active. It is the *adaequatio mentis et vitae*.<sup>49</sup> The theory of development I sketch here attempts to account not only for the possible future development of dogma, although its most immediate practical usefulness, if valid, would be to render possible a consciously undertaken programme of doctrinal development.

*Are you thinking in the direction of the so-called theological modernists, Alfred Loisy and George Tyrrell?*

The theory of doctrinal development I sketch here bears some real, but many superficial resemblances to the so-called Modernist theory. Therefore, I should point out certain essential differences between the two. The Modernist theory of development, at least as defined and condemned by *Pascendi*,<sup>50</sup> which is the only one that matters for present purposes, is in summary as follows. Since God does not reveal propositions or formulae about himself, he does not truly reveal himself except insofar as he implants in man an immanent religious sense or consciousness, and an impulse towards the divine. Christianity is a revealed religion only insofar as it is the evolutionary development of man's religious experience or consciousness, for the Modernists did not distinguish between the two. That is, Christianity is the development of the original principles immanent in human nature. Therefore, the Judaeo-Christian revelation is not essentially different from any other; it is much like that of any natural religion, except in that, having followed its own evolutionary line, it differs in specific content, in a great many dogmas, from other religions. Thus, the conceptualization of religious consciousness, religious sentiment, or religious experience has no other purpose than to furnish the believer with a means of giving to himself an account of his faith. Dogmas, therefore, are symbols which stand between the believer and his faith. They must evolve because they are in essence, and

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<sup>49</sup> correspondence of the mind and life.

<sup>50</sup> *Pascendi dominici gregis* (1907) issued by Pope Pius X condemned a range of principles which were meant to allow for change in Roman Catholic dogma.

precisely as dogmatic symbols, inadequate. They were originally inadequate and shall always remain so. All this assumes, of course, that revelation was in no sense completed with the close of the apostolic age. Revelation is rather a perpetual unfolding of the religious sense immanent in man's nature.

*Given that dogmatic symbols are inadequate as you suggest, how then does what you understand differ from the Modernist position?*

The theory of development in accordance with the views I express here would contest each and every one of [*Pascendi's*] propositions. It would instead propose that although God does not reveal propositions or formulae or concepts about himself, he truly reveals himself. He does this not through a principle immanent in human nature. He does it personally, by his own agency, through his personal presence to human history, in which he freely chooses to appear and take part. Although we cannot deny to God the possibility of acting in all human history and to reveal himself in other ways, his revelation to man in the Judaeo-Christian tradition is unique and extraordinary. The Christian religion and the Catholic Church are, in this extraordinary and unique sense, the true religion and the true Church to which all men are called. The conceptualization of religious experience of faith does not come between man and the object of faith. On the contrary, it enables the experience of faith to exist. Dogmatic formulae and concepts, therefore, do not mediate between faith and its object. They express faith in its object, God. Therefore, they evolve not because they are always and from the beginning necessarily inadequate, but because as man develops they become inadequate if they fail to evolve. They must, therefore, in a sense necessarily develop, since man himself must develop in order to exist.

*In light of man's development, then, is it then possible to think of revelation as closed as you noted earlier?*

Revelation was completed with the close of the apostolic age at least in the sense that, the Redemption having been accomplished as a concrete and discrete historical event, mankind ceased to exist in the preparatory period of *Heilsgeschichte*<sup>51</sup> and henceforth would exist in the final historical age of man in his relations with God, that is, in the new and eternal testament. But this does not mean that within the age of the Incarnation there can be no further development of mankind's faith-response to God's continuous self-revelation nor, therefore, in the dogmas that conceptualize and formulate that belief. Nor, incidentally, does it mean that there could not be a further stage of divine-human relations beyond the new and eternal testament of man's last historical age if, at the end of the world man should evolve altogether beyond humanity. On the contrary, as man, by his natural powers, develops and becomes more perfectly aware of himself and the world, it is necessary that the conceptualization of his religious faith develop correspondingly in order to preserve if not also perfect his original faith in the self-same self-revealing God.

*Your explanation notwithstanding, I'll need some time to digest your overall distinctions between the Modernist perspective and your understanding of the development of dogma. However, can you cite a specific point distinguishing between the two?*

The fundamental mistake of the Modernists consisted in attempting to reinterpret the traditional doctrines of the development of dogma and of the nature of revelation in line with the contemporary awareness of human evolution and historicity, but on the continued assumption of the traditional theory of knowledge, in which a subject enters into union with an object to overcome an original isolation between the two. If so, the only alternative to the traditional idea that God's revelation was

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<sup>51</sup> *Heilsgeschichte*: an interpretation of history emphasizing God's saving acts and viewing Jesus Christ as central in redemption. Cf. Lauer, 1958:172, n.20 where he distinguishes "*Geschichte* from *Historie*. The first is a traceable progressive development, whereas the second is but the record of this development."

essentially and uniquely cast in the original concepts employed by Scripture, is the idea that it was cast in an immanent religious sentiment and inclination as part of the original constitution of human nature. In the theory I suggest here human knowledge is not the bridging of an original isolation but, on the contrary, the self-differentiation of consciousness in and through its objectification of the world and of itself and conceptualization is the socio-historical mechanism through which the self-differentiation of consciousness can take place. Concepts are not the subjective expression of an objective reality nor, therefore, a means whereby we become reflectively conscious of a self which already existed prior to reflection. Concepts are the self-expression of consciousness and, therefore, the means by which we objectify the world and the self, and the means whereby we self-communicate with another self, including God. In short, the means by which we objectify ourselves for another self is the means by which we objectify ourselves for ourselves.

*I am intrigued by your last sentence. Can you express it in a philosophical nutshell, as it were?*

Man's psychic life is not the mind's, unilateral and intentional, union with a reality from which it was originally separated by its substantive self-containment. On the contrary, it is the mind's self-differentiation of its-self out of a reality with which it was originally continuous and united in un-differentiation. But since consciousness differentiates the self out of the totality of undifferentiated reality, the faithful, steadfast and continued development of the self can actually occur only to the degree that the world is objectified, that is, conceptualized, systematized, organized, lived with and made meaningful for our consciousness. The most basic doubt that cannot possibly be entertained, not merely in good logic, as with Descartes' impossibility of doubting that I think, but even in lived experience, is the doubt that I might

be an-other. The fundamental empirical, and not merely logical, fact of philosophy is not *cogito*,<sup>52</sup> but *sum*.<sup>53</sup>

*To hear you say that reminds me of Ludwig Feuerbach’s Proposition 55 which I understand to be a broader notion than Descartes’ “cogito.” I quote Feuerbach from 1843:*

Art, religion, philosophy, and science are only manifestations or revelations of the true human essence. Man, the complete and true man, is only he who possesses a sense that is esthetic or artistic, religious, or moral, philosophic or scientific; in general, only he who excludes from himself nothing, essentially human is man. “*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*”<sup>54</sup> — this sentence, taken in its most universal and highest meaning, is the motto of the new philosophy.

*And on that note, I must end this segment but I look forward in our next session and to your views on the relationship between philosophy and faith.*

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<sup>52</sup> *cogito*: I think

<sup>53</sup> *sum*: I am

<sup>54</sup> Latin translation: ‘I am a man, nothing that is human I consider foreign to me.’



## **The Underdevelopment of Christian Theism**

*Now for this segment let us focus on the underdevelopment of Christian theism. When all is said and done how do you see philosophy's role as supporting the faith?*

The transcendence of God makes it necessary both to deny and to affirm. God is beyond existing and non-existing. I do not say that we have always found it possible to abide by this paradox, or to conceive superlative affirmations that were irreducible to simple theses. The point is that we cannot adequately believe in God unless these qualifications and this relative disbelief become integrating parts of our lived faith. Creative Catholic theology has therefore increasingly turned to non-Scholastic which means almost exclusively non-Catholic, indeed, non-Christian, philosophical thought. And a philosophy that had become so impotent that it needed upholding by faith should perhaps have been considered more of a hindrance than a help.

*But philosophy was seen in medieval times as a servant to theology, was it not?*

My remark applies not to mediaeval Scholasticism as such, but to its retention as the immutable form of Christian philosophy long after its time had passed. All I have taught about the positive benefits of Christianity's hellenization I believe to be applicable, with added emphasis, to its principal philosophical component, namely, medieval Scholasticism. But by the same token, the obsolescence of Scholasticism goes together with that of Christianity's hellenic cultural form. As human consciousness continued to develop beyond the middle ages, thanks indeed to its development during the Middle Ages, the usefulness of Scholasticism waned at the same time that its employment gradually became its adoption in the sixteenth century, then its establishment early in the nineteenth, its beatification in 1879, and finally its canonization in 1917.

*In your understanding, scholastic philosophy is waning. If that is indeed the case can philosophy be of use for any future belief in God?*

Perhaps the most significant defining point of an adequate contemporary Christian philosophy, in general, but with special reference to its study of God, would be that it should begin with a consideration of the needs of the Christian faith, not those of Greek metaphysics. The problem of God would then not have to be posed in terms of demonstrating the existence of God in abstraction from his nature. For the creed does not affirm, "I believe that God that is, a being whose concept is hereby presupposed, actually exists." Nor, "I believe that God, that is, a being whose existence is hereby presupposed, is truthfully to be attributed such-and-such notes, to the exclusion of others." The creed's affirmation, "I believe in God," bears upon a simple reality, the reality of God, which cannot be analyzed into distinct aspects, however much the real unity of these aspects be thereafter asserted, without distorting the meaning of the belief. From this it follows that the Christian's act of faith must bear directly on the reality of God, not upon words or upon concepts; this is the corollary to the idea that God reveals himself, not words about or concepts of himself.

*Your comments remind me of the "As If" philosophy of Hans Vaihinger that requires that we act as if God really exists, whether he does or does not.*

I stress that faith must bear directly on the reality of God, in order to distinguish this from the doctrine of St. Thomas, according to which faith terminates at God himself through the mediation of the propositions of the creed. In brief, St. Thomas's doctrine is that belief in the propositions of the creed amounts to belief in God himself, because the propositions of the creed are true.

*Having studied within the scholastic tradition, I wonder if it is possible to transcend the conceptual dichotomy of God's essence and existence. Are we not bound by both the nature of our minds*

*and the nature of reality to distinguish between the existence and the essence of God's nature?*

I believe that it is possible to transcend this dichotomy, that we are not by nature bound to it, any more than we are bound to affirm the real distinction of essence and existence in creatures in order to conceptualize their contingency. If we depart from Greek metaphysics at their Parmenidean root, knowledge is no longer an immaterial "intussusception" of reality, and the investigation of being is no longer guided by the equivalence of intelligibility and being.<sup>55</sup> Hence the contingency of creatures would not be conceived as a real distinction between essence and existence, but as that peculiar quality of their factuality which consists in their appearing, their coming-in-to-being, their sudden emergence, as it were, onto the cosmic stage without having been previously listed in the program. In other words, man's contingency is the fact that in order to be he must create himself. A metaphysics of presence such as Gabriel Marcel's, or an eschatological metaphysics such as Berdyaev's, do not conceive any reality as polarized by existence and essence. They are concerned with being in its empirical immediacy. They try to avoid every a priori construction such as that required to distinguish between essence and existence as constituents of reality as such. For such a philosophy would be concerned with showing how God himself in his reality is present to human experience. Its concern would be the presence and reality of God. Such a God, however, would not be even partially that of Greek metaphysics. For this would be an integrally Christian philosophy. Its God would be wholly and exclusively the Christian God.

*Given your reference to Parmenides, I have the sense that Hans Vaihinger was of the same opinion, although about fifty*

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<sup>55</sup> The "Parmenidean root" as Dewart calls it, translates as: "That which can be thought is identical with that which can be." The Greek philosopher, Parmenides of Elea, lived in the early part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. A posthuman version might be stated: That which can be *virtually imagined* is identical with that which *is*."

*years earlier than your observation about the Parmenidean root. Permit me to read a passage from his book.*

Parmenides, as is well known, held that multiplicity and change were meaningless illusions; there was no beginning; all change and all separation were not true Being but Not-Being, something unreal and unthinkable. Only Being eternally at rest, unchanging, and unmoved, only what persisted in eternal, divine Sameness, was real. Existence is an indivisible whole, a uniform continuum, limitless and absolute. The world of sensory appearance, on the hand, is mere illusion, and unreal. Becoming and passing away are but a delusion of the senses.<sup>56</sup>

*With that having been said I would like to turn to your thoughts on the development of Christian theism. Earlier you spoke of a God who is not of Greek metaphysics. Do you care to speculate about how the notion of a God, not of Greek metaphysics, might develop presuming such a need is recognized, as you suggest?*

Once Christianity becomes fully conscious of the need for further developing its theism it is likely to reconceptualize consciously its belief in God. All history, but very specially perhaps Christian history, is freely and spontaneously made by the creative forces generated by man's interrelations with the ultimate reality, God. For this reason, history is radically unforeseeable. Nevertheless, what is radically unforeseeable may well be empirically predictable, though we may not say what final goal we are bound to arrive at, we can determine in which direction we are already going. We can forecast what points we are likely to traverse, on the basis of the decisions we have already taken and on the assumption that we will follow them through.

*What major point do you forecast in this regard?*

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<sup>56</sup> Vaihinger, (1965:138).

The truth that Christianity needs for its health, protection and development is the reality of man's individual and cultural growth in self-consciousness. We now stand on a very uncertain terrain.

*Given this uncertain terrain of self-consciousness, can we ever be sure about the being and existence of God?*

What the religious experience of God discloses is a reality beyond being. I do not suggest that if God is beyond being he is empirically unknowable, or that he is, unless we use the term hyperbolically, ineffable. Nor does saying that God is a reality beyond being mean that he can be experienced only mystically or through affective knowledge or connaturality. For unless we retain the Greek metaphysical outlook, the ordinary facts of Christian experience are sufficient to establish that we do experience God, but that we do not experience him as being. We should determine what consequences for our understanding of God follow from this observation, rather than the consequences for our understanding of faith, within the general presuppositions of the Greek theories of knowledge, that follow from the presupposition that the God in whom we believe is the Supreme Being.

*If God is not to be experienced as being, how is God to be experienced?*

What we must do is to open ourselves to that which transcendence reveals. God's real presence to us and, therefore, his reality in himself, does not depend upon his being a being or an object. In fact, our belief in the Christian God is post-primitive to the degree that we apprehend that although there is no super-being behind beings, no supreme being who stands at the summit of the hierarchy of being, nevertheless a reality beyond the totality of being reveals itself by its presence.

*How do we know something is "there," beyond being?*

The reality of human transcendence discloses the presence of a reality beyond all actual and possible empirical intuition. In the presence of myself to myself I find that over and above my own agency, and indeed as the ultimate condition of the possibility of that agency, there is a presence which reveals me to myself in a supererogatory and gratuitous way, that is, by making me more fully myself than I should be if I were not exposed to its impact.

*If God is waiting to make me conscious of myself, he must be "there" in some form, no?*

The presence of God does not exhibit him as a prior, anterior, supra-temporal or eternal reality. It manifests him as a present one. The point can hardly be missed once we rid ourselves of any hellenic compulsion to think of God as the First, or the Last, Cause, or as the *arche*<sup>57</sup> and *aitia*<sup>58</sup> of existence, or as the Supreme Being. We can philosophically account for man's experience of God in terms which are not intrinsically inadequate, if we first account for human experience in more adequate terms than Scholasticism does.

*Scholasticism accounts for knowledge "of" God for our benefit in terms which you consider inadequate. What about in terms of personal meaning "for" God in himself?*

God does not have meaning in-and-for-himself, though he can have, of course, meaning for us. The problem for Christian philosophy is to explore that reality and, in the first place, to try to understand the meaning of God's simultaneous presence and absence. But this does not mean that we must determine whether an actually existing thing-in-itself corresponds to the object of thought, God. What needs to be proven is not that a God-being objectively exists. What requires a demonstration, for it is not

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<sup>57</sup> *arche*: (Greek) reflecting the sense of "beginning," "origin" or "source of action," and in later philosophy the first principle or element.

<sup>58</sup> *aitia*: (Greek) cause or reason.

immediately obvious, is God's presence. Whether it be in what sense, in what way, and with what consequences, God is present. Present, in the first place to himself, though this is largely a theological problem.

*As a theological problem, where do you see God as present?*

Present, in any event, to being, present to world, present to man, present to man's faith, present to the Church, present to history, and present to the future that we create. In the future we may well learn to conceive God in a nobler way. The question would always remain open whether our self-creation will or will not proceed so as to make God to-exist-for-us.

*All that being said, I would like to ask a particular question or two concerning a meaningful concept of God. I suspect that your answers will not simply recast classical knowledge in contemporary terms. First, what have you to say about the personality of God?*

Christian theism might in the future not conceive God as a person, or indeed as a Trinity of persons. The concept of person remains, of course, metaphorically adequate for theism. Personality has been accorded to God as long as the concept has taken its place in a philosophy for which it was what is most perfect in all nature. In our contemporary understanding of personality, however, this is no longer true. We no longer find it fitting or truly fair to the nature of God to preoccupy ourselves with granting to God the infinite degree of the creaturely perfections. Moreover, personality is no longer apt to signify any perfection transcending man, because we no longer understand personality in relation to Nature, since we do not understand being as a hierarchy of perfection and reality. I assume here, of course, that man has evolved from the animal, but that being, though created, has not evolved from God. Behind this is the fact that the very approach of the contemporary mind to an understanding of every reality, including personality, is at variance with the hellenic approach. The ultimate reason why

God was fittingly conceived as a supra-rational person is the same as the reason why he was fittingly conceived as the super-being, that is, for the hellenic mind to understand any given kind of being was to find its proper place in a hierarchical scheme of being which ran from the highest to the lowest.

*Then what today replaces the hellenic hierarchical approach of the past?*

Today we do not understand man as a rational animal because we do not understand him as an animal to begin with. Now, the contemporary mind does not conceive man as a body, organized and potentially having life, to which consciousness is somehow united.

*Now we are back to your uncertain terrain of an independent consciousness.*

Consciousness is the constituent of man. It is equivalent to life and existence. Personal conscious existence is all that we have of ourselves in order to create ourselves in time. This means that personality is the summit of man's actuality, but hardly the summit he hopes to achieve. Man is the being who is sufficiently perfect to tend to transcend personality.

*So, it would seem to me that I can engage in holistic thinking for a clue to myself, my existence. That is, "I am greater than the sum of my individuated parts."*

A person is a being who knows enough to want to go beyond himself. But the idea is scarcely new. In the most ancient Christian tradition, too, man's ultimate achievement is not found in the circumscription of his personality. It is found on the contrary in its communication and expansion beyond itself into another self, indeed, into a community of selves. The ultimate hope of the Christian faith is not that man should achieve within himself the act of beholding God, a vision close enough to constitute an



intimate union with God. It is to achieve an intimate union with every person through a union with God in God himself, to achieve a going-out-of-one-self-into-God, an out-going that is real enough to constitute a self-transformation.

*In light of this transcendental out-going in life, what do you make of the disaffiliated religious thinker, a Lone Ranger, as it were?*

The typical experience of the disaffiliated religious person today is that God could not possibly be a person. He must be some kind of cosmic force. This is surely a naive view to the degree that it implies that God is less than man. But this is not all that this common expression connotes. It also means that God is, rather than a centre of being to which we are drawn, an expansive force which impels persons to go out from and beyond themselves. This expression represents an effort, born of understandable impatience, to transcend the primitive God-being, God-object and God-person of absolute theism. The truth that that crude expression so mistakenly conceives may yet be redeemed in the future by Christian theism.

*I am led to ask: what about the omnipotence of God?*

If we immediately proceed to conceive God as having, or, for that matter, as being, omnipotence, eternity, immateriality, infinity, immutability, omniscience, etc., in the last analysis what matters is the attributes themselves. The question is rather, what can, and what, if anything, cannot happen, once God and man enter into personal relations. The problem is not how to explain a metaphysical property of God which would have implications for us, but how to understand the reciprocal relations between man and God and, in particular, how mutual power enters into the relationship.

*Does mutual power have to do with co-creatorship? If so, and if I am in a relationship with God, am I not God, or at least part of God, in some sense?*

The problem has to do, as it were, with the politics of man and God. If God is a true reality truly present to being, there are true relations between God and creatures. The politics of this relation should be understood accordingly, that is, in terms of reciprocal being-with, rather than in those of acting and being acted upon. If a Christian looks at the world and understands nature through hellenic eyes, he will find it necessary to assert the omnipotence of God over and against nature. For in this view of nature, either God is necessitated by it, or it is subject to God.

*What are we most likely to see in our contemporary experience without "hellenic eyes," as you describe it?*

In the contemporary experience nature is no longer understood as the principle which necessitates from within the operations of beings, and therefore makes them resist violence from without. We do not see nature as the source of independence and self-sufficiency which it was for Aristotle. Let us rather say that nature does not have its own natural finalities independently of God's. The case is not that God can do the impossible, that is, that God has power to do that which nature cannot do, but that for God all things are possible and that, therefore, with God all things are possible to man. In God nature can do anything. The moral implication of this is that once it no longer has God's omnipotence to fall back on, our Christian conscience may be awakened to feel its adult responsibilities for taking the full initiative in restoring all things in Christ and for exercising its creative ingenuity in order to determine how this should be done.

*If we are truly responsible for our future, must I believe that God is not all-powerful, but rather limited in some fashion by my presence?*

The trouble is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for many Christians, and their numbers proliferate daily, to believe in the authoritarian God as traditionally understood. Indeed, some find themselves compelled by their Christian faith, and constrained by their loyalty to Christ, to his Church, and to the living History in which they live and breathe, positively and actively to dis-believe in a divine being who is only in degree and in detail different from primitive deities or from philosophical gods. They find themselves compelled by their Christian faith to dis-believe in a Supreme Being, in a God behind whose kindness and generosity to man stands a supreme, omnipotent and eternal will.

*Again, does this not reduce God's exalted status?*

We may yet judge that we have not sufficiently well appreciated in the past that to place God at the summit of creation is to place him in an insufficiently noble station in the world. To say that God is the highest and the first being, and that he has to the infinite degree all the creaturely perfections, may not be nearly enough to begin to approximate the transcendent reality of God. To multiply infinities is not the way to transcend them. He seems rather to rule himself by the principle of noblesse oblige, so that being the noblest he is also the humblest reality, not having hesitated to give man the freedom that renders him capable of true personal friendship and partnership in the creation of history and world. It may be significant that religion is the last area within the Christian world where the institution of homage is consciously and unashamedly retained.

*Following this logic, then, I need not continue to worship the child born at Christmas time.*

Worship might be better understood as the rendering of ourselves present to the presence of God, whether in the interior prayer which sends no message to God but which receives his presence, or in the public and common ceremonies which visibly,

audibly and sensibly unite us through our collective presence to each other in the presence of the present God.

*With these profound thoughts, we conclude this final segment. My penultimate question is: In all the issues addressed by philosophy and theology, are we not becoming less spiritual?*

In recent times, as philosophy has diverged more and more from its Greek presuppositions, and as nature and essence have ceased to be understood as intelligible necessities, the concept of the supernatural has lost its usefulness for Christian theism. This is one concrete reason why, as I have already suggested, since the mainstream of Catholic philosophy has remained Scholastic and hence unsympathetic to the contemporary understanding of nature, Catholic theology, especially in those circles that have consciously abandoned Scholasticism for example, the Teilhardians, or in those specialties that were never dominated by it, for example, in scriptural studies, has increasingly turned to non-Christian secular thought for philosophical help. Although one might wish to avoid the terms naturalism and secularism on account of their historical association with philosophies that are not easily reconcilable with the Christian faith, the fact is that Catholic thought and experience tends with increasing rapidity to interpret Christian belief in the terms of the temporal history of natural entities.

*Finally, are we thus opening the door to secularism by casting belief in terms of the temporal history of natural entities?*

It is most important to note that in this formula the term natural is the equivalent of historically factual. I should incidentally remark that this has profound implications for an understanding of the relation of faith and scientific enquiry, and in particular for the problems of the nature and methods of Christian philosophy and theology. I suggest that in the future we may not feel the need to conceive God as a super-natural being. If we discard the hellenic view of nature, the Christian God no longer must, in order to remain free, gracious and freely self-giving, perform super-natural

feats, undertake super-natural functions and roles, or enjoy super-natural status. The traditional Christian faith could then be reasserted under new forms which might make more meaningful and vivid the concepts of grace and charity than the theory of the super-natural has done in the past.

## PART III

### ON THE STAGNATION OF PHILOSOPHY <sup>59</sup>

Interpreting Leslie Dewart

Preamble

#### Why read philosophers?

I suppose that the immediate answer that comes to mind, for most individuals, is that “I want to learn something,” or perhaps to know what other philosophers know. That was my answer at one time. However, today (in my retirement years) that is not the case. Rather, I read other philosophers to know what *I* know as a philosopher, not so much what *other* philosophers know, although this occurs also. That means that I read to discover if I am in accord or discord with the ideas of the philosopher I read. In short, I *already* know something of the issue before I search out a philosopher to read.

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<sup>59</sup> Vanderburg’s (1985:313) insights regarding social stagnation offers insights into philosophical stagnation. “When there are no more tensions or dialectical relationships within a group [*philosophers*], there is little to be shared and communicated. Because the members have nothing to say to each other, social ties between them are weakened. There is little internal reason for the group’s existence. It [*philosophy*] will begin to disintegrate unless it is held together by external pressures. The members of the group must experience the reality of their daily lives sufficiently differently to have something to share and maintain communication, but the differences must not be too large or they would live in different worlds, rendering communication impossible. A group must maintain a diversity within a unity. ... The same is true for a society [*of philosophers*]. For a society [*philosophy*] to maintain itself, it must meet challenges that force it to implicitly find reasons for its existence. Different groups [*philosophies*] will give divergent answers, and it is by these differences that a society [*philosophy*] evolves. A society [*philosophy*] that does not evolve begins to repeat itself. When this happens it stagnates and disintegrates because people become indifferent and see no reason for belonging to [*discussing*] it.”

The "inquiring minds want to know" stage of my philosophical reading has passed and now it is a matter of confirming the truthfulness of that which I am aware, but not from the perspective of my classical philosophical education. That is to say, I now ask myself, am I humanly conscious to the fullest degree possible? I ask this question from a posthuman philosophical perspective and answer it from the same point of view.

A posthuman approach, does not replace the humanist approach, but rather, co-exists as a philosophical movement alongside humanism and the other various philosophical fons (in the archival sense) in contemporary thinking. Thus, elements of the humanist attitude will be evident in a posthuman perspective. I am not concerned with posthuman philosophy as a formal discipline within the universities but as a natural activity of thinking persons. It is a phenomenological attitude.

In this book I am concerned with the philosophical writings of a particular religious philosopher, Leslie Dewart. I consider myself as a "disciple," as it were, in order to understand "the master's" approach to understanding philosophical reality. One is a disciple of a philosopher only to the extent that one understands and is convinced by the master's arguments. However, in addition to accepting his statements as correct I offer a subjective interpretation on the reasoning of his arguments.

The mind is the faculty of thinking and consciousness is the name given to that process by which living cognizant living beings are aware of themselves and their environment. Within our consciousness, ideas precede their written expression. They are in the mind, before they are on paper. Further, these earlier written expressions are interpreted by a later evolved culture; the "original" idea having been expressed in myth or through poetry. Yet, not all of these primal ideas reached written status and of the more ancient philosophical writing only fragments remain with the number extant unknown. Clearly, philosophy was undertaken orally before its written form. In the Western tradition, written texts (often in Greek or Latin) were only in the hands of professionals and often not even an entire corpus was available. As well, not all ideas of a particular philosopher were accepted by

members of his school or by other *savants* outside his particular school of thought. Philosophy existed as *theology*, before its current name and its appearance as the written word.<sup>60</sup> In short, philosophizing, in the broadest sense, originated and developed within human oral (mythological) traditions.

Philosophy is theology without God. No act of faith is needed to establish the authority of philosophical authors. In the West, a "canon" of philosophical writings was established (by the classical academics) which became normative through the use of reason thus establishing the principles of Western philosophical thought. Reason became its own guarantor. Today, philosophy needs interpretation as to its meaning in a posthuman context. The problem is that the various schools of Western philosophical thought, unlike the traditional theological schools, have no equivalent of an "ecclesia" for explaining meaning, nor for commanding allegiance in the posthuman context. Authority, in posthuman philosophical thought resides in the philosopher, not in the community. It is a case of autonomy, not heteronomy. The posthuman philosopher must contend with the possibility of a faulty translation of texts, the obscurity of texts (that may need explanation through other texts) as well as, not knowing the complexity of a written language, or, failing to distinguish between

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<sup>60</sup> As Schillebeeckx (1979:95) notes: "Aristotle also used the word *theology* with a **new meaning**, or at least **changed its field of application**. Making a three-fold division of science or scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*) into physical, mathematical, and theological, he raised theology to the level of a **philosophical science**, and made it the 'first' or supreme form of philosophical thought. This 'first philosophy' was concerned with the highest causes of the visible divine astral world" [my emphasis]. Further, Nigel Warburton (2010:103) wrote in his discussion with Moore: "And historically, most philosophers who got interested in the infinite were talking not just about an abstract mathematical concept but about the nature of God." [A. W. Moore replied.] "That's right. The infinite has always been of philosophical interest. Western philosophy, going right back to the pre-Socratics, over 2300 years ago, has always had a fascination with the infinite. As you quite rightly say, historically there's been more emphasis on those more metaphysical aspects of the infinite — in particular, as part of a preoccupation with God — than the more mathematical aspects that we were considering earlier."



literal and figurative senses. These issues determine the quality of philosophical reasoning in a post human context.

My primary purpose in reading philosophy is not to increase the *quantity* of my knowledge, but rather to improve the *quality* of my understanding of the information I possess by heightening, deepening or expanding my consciousness. My current approach to philosophy is not that of a classical *discipline*, characteristic of the type studied formally in the universities, but of *wisdom*, which is proper to the evolution of the human mind, and in which subjective values (morality) are more significant than objective facts. Thus, in reading other philosophers, I am not undertaking to acquire knowledge supplied by formal instruction from without, but seeking to become wiser by improving instruction from within. That is why I read philosophy.

The layout of this section.

In Part III, I have selected and edited paragraphs from Dewart's books, and in many cases telescoped them into shorter passages to suit my purposes of interpretation. All words in italics are in Dewart's original text. Concerning pronouns, I have preserved the literary convention of his day. The edited passages are preceded by the page numbers in Dewart's original publication with my comments in a footnote. Because of my editorializing I suggest that the serious reader obtain a copy of Dewart's original works to identify more clearly his text and context.

Dewart's last book was published posthumously and he had not finalized it. The task of editing this text fell to Cajetan Menke, who, to my mind, did an admirable job at capturing Dewart's thought without distorting his style of philosophizing. My comments within Dewart's earlier works are placed in a footnote. In his last book, however, I change the layout and place his text in a bold font with my comments below.

My interpretation of Leslie Dewart's understanding of the reasons for the stagnation of philosophy is deliberately restricted to certain ideas and notions that "caught my eye" for their significance to my point of view and my current philosophical

interest. Naturally, I cannot recount all the points of Dewart's philosophy that have held interest for me over the years. Another reviewer would have made other selections, no doubt.

Finally, a word of note for this section. It is taken from Auguste Sabatier's final comments in *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*.

In this book I have hardly noted any but facts that have been verified in myself and by myself. It is true that I suppose that every reflective reader is capable of finding them and tracing them out in his own personal experience. Those who are able and wishful to re-read my book themselves, and thus verify my analysis, may perhaps draw some profit from it. Those who read me otherwise will not only lose their time and pains — they will misunderstand at every step the meaning of my phrases and the direction of my ideas. Beneath my reasonings or my images they will put other ideas and other intentions than mine, and they may afterwards, with an apparent good conscience, deduce from them the most terrible consequences. Philosophical language lends itself to all and permits all; and the mischief of it is that it would be useless to desire to prevent these quarrels. New explanations only give rise to new misunderstandings, and simply serve to perpetuate a dispute without interest and without fruit. We can only repeat the saying of the ancient sages of Arabia: *Magna est veritas et praevalabit* (Truth is mighty and will prevail).

**CHRISTIANITY AND REVOLUTION** <sup>61</sup>  
***The Lesson of Cuba***  
**1963**

The Political Vocation of Christianity Today

(p. 275/76)

Two questions underlie every problem raised in this study: One is philosophical, the other theological. <sup>[62]</sup> From the point of view of Christian philosophy, the question is that of the nature of human freedom. From the point of view of Christian theology, it is that of the nature of the Church. <sup>[63]</sup>

Concerning the second I will remark only this, not by way of solution, but only in order to give some precision to the question itself. The problem is whether the Church is a reality anterior to human beings: Whether the Church, for all its divinity, is integrated prior to human membership or only out of that membership. For it may well be that the Church is integrated by Christ, in virtue of His principal and gratuitous agency, but that it is integrated by Him only out of human beings — and nothing else. It is true that every society is, as it were, more than the sum of its parts. This is most especially true of the Catholic Church. But if the Church is not a reality prior to its parts, then its members make up the Church. <sup>[64]</sup> If we are engrafted onto the vine, we are the vine: We do not make up the Church as ornaments make up a Christmas tree.

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<sup>61</sup> Adolfs (1966:40) notes: “In my opinion, it is wrong to regard the developments of our own time (and the future) as revolutionary. I believe that, although the dynamism of the present is the product of revolutions, the revolutions themselves belong to the past.”

<sup>62</sup> Throughout his philosophizing Dewart preserved the distinction between philosophy and theology and insisted that they are distinct, but related.

<sup>63</sup> Dewart restricts his theological perspective to the political nature of the church and excludes speculative philosophical questions concerning its supernatural nature.

<sup>64</sup> The question of something “being real” prior to its existence, as we shall see, occupies Dewart throughout all his works.

The idea that the reality of the Church is separated from the reality of men leads to the conception of the Church as a totalitarian polity. The impersonal, inhuman Church becomes then a Leviathan to serve, a Juggernaut who requires human sacrifice. Yet, like the Sabbath, man was not made for the Church, but the Church for man, and the Universal Church for all men.

What I would comment upon rather less summarily is the other question, namely, that which concerns the Christian condition and the rational nature of human freedom. <sup>[65]</sup> The inordinate influence of Greek philosophy on the Christian conception of man, particularly since early in the twelfth century, has been canonized in a concept of human freedom which may be more or less deficient regarding the individual human person, <sup>[66]</sup> but which is totally so regarding society and history. We believe in human freedom, but, like the Greeks, we assume the determinism of society and of history. <sup>[67]</sup> This is why we have not really solved the antinomies of the individual and society and of personal responsibility and historical conditioning. We know that some integration of their opposite claims must be made — our Christian instinct suffices for that — and we hobble along in practice, trying our best to do so. We have not yet managed to devise a theory to explain the nature of that integration. The suggestion made here is that both society and history, being human, are as free as the human person is, and that all three realities are free in essentially the same way: Whatever we predicate of individual freedom should be essentially predicable of both society and history.

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<sup>65</sup> The "Christian condition" and "rational nature" are existential, not speculative questions for Dewart.

<sup>66</sup> The theme of the deficiency of human freedom is always present to some degree and in some form of expression in Dewart's works.

<sup>67</sup> The question of determinism (a process that accepts cause as external to being) figures prominently in Dewart's philosophy. Dewart argues for self-determination of society and history (a process that accepts cause as internal to being) in that it is a conscious human activity.

(p. 277/78)

Do we really seek to apply ethical principles to prospective human social and political behavior? This question can be answered in the affirmative only if we assume that there is an ideal social or political condition, determined beforehand by an agency either demiurgic or divine, to which our behavior must conform as to a plan drawn ahead of time.<sup>[68]</sup> But unlike the Greeks we Christians need not assume the supreme regulative reality of fate. We believe that we are free — there is the source of our responsibility and the condition of our genuinely moral status: “our misfortune,” when we betray our responsibility and our freedom, “is precisely that there is no scenario written by God in advance (it would be less sinister): and that the ill-omened element of the drama comes from created existents, ourselves:<sup>[69]</sup> and from the fact that God plays fair.” The point is that this is as true of the individual as it is of society and of history.

If the speculative enquiry of the philosopher into practical, human affairs has any meaning and any Christian value the reason is that what the Christian philosopher is trying to do is not to puzzle out as Plato and Aristotle did, the riddle of a perversely enigmatic god’s preconceived order (whether social, political, economic, or personal) but, rather, to work out with his intellect,

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<sup>68</sup> A “social or political condition, determined beforehand” is a philosophical fiction from Dewart’s point of view. Later, Roden (2015:6) writes: “The possibility of posthumans implies that the future of life and mind might not only be stranger than we imagine, but stranger than we can currently conceive. ... [Speculative posthumanism] suggests that our current technical practice could precipitate a nonhuman world that we cannot yet understand, in which ‘our’ values may have no place,” which begs the question: where do we put God?

<sup>69</sup> The Protestant evangelical theologian, Auguste Sabatier, approximately 120 years earlier, expressed the same notion: “The Christian seed is never sown in a neutral and empty soil. No soul, no social state, is a *tabula rasa*. The place is always occupied by anterior traditions of ideas, rites, or customs, by institutions in possession. Christianity cannot therefore root itself anywhere without entering into conflict with the regnant powers, without giving battle to prejudices, manners, and superstitions which naturally resist, and which, when conquered, spring up again in other forms in the victorious religion” (Sabatier, 1897:170).

creatively, arduously, and faithfully, a plan or an order by which he can discharge, individually, collectively, and historically, the responsibilities of the freedom in which he has been created and of the supernatural vocation to which he has been called by God. <sup>[70]</sup> The Greeks needed to presuppose "ideals" because they never doubted the bondage of fate. We believe, instead, in human freedom, individual, collective, and historical, and in the invitational challenge of man by God. To live by ideals is the best that pagans can do: It is not even the least that Christians are required to achieve.

(p. 281)

If a morally good social life and a peaceful world are possible to free agents the reason is that their problems of conduct arise out of their consciousness and subjectivity rather than out of their struggle with society and with their kind. <sup>[71]</sup> There lies the radical freedom of man. We are truly responsible for our conduct, and no one else, no other man, no other group, no other time, can as such do away with our moral freedom. Only we ourselves can. The political order, thus, must be grounded on the social and historical freedom of man.

(pp. 284-87)

Henceforth we can only be guided in international politics by the widest loyalty to the whole of mankind. <sup>[72]</sup> We have become

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<sup>70</sup> However, speculative enquiry is valuable in determining the responsibility and truthfulness of our human activity, not God's truth, according to Dewart. He expands on this notion in later works. Roden (2020:15) from a speculative perspective notes that "any philosophical theory of posthumanism owes us an account of what it means to be human such that it is conceivable that there could be nonhuman successors to humans."

<sup>71</sup> Dewart's *primary* philosophical focus is always on the person, a unique living organism, not the organism's environment. Later works in which he discusses the evolutionary process expand on this notion.

<sup>72</sup> Note that Dewart's notion of "loyalty" is to personal organisms, not to reasoned political or philosophical principles that constitute an ideology.

one world.<sup>[73]</sup> What we need to do for our own good, collectively and severally, is to recognize this truth and to act upon it. This is the political vocation of the Christian citizen in our time.

That brings us finally face to face with the crucial problem of a Christian political philosophy: the basis of the relation of Church and State — or more precisely, of Church and World.<sup>[74]</sup> Christian thought and practice have alternated between identifying and separating Church and world and, loosely speaking, the best compromise that we have developed to date is that of distinguishing between them without either separating or uniting. This solution may improve upon the solutions worked out by the medieval and by the modern periods of history, but in common with them it assumes a doctrine of the basic relation of the Church to cultural manifestations — of which political society is but one instance. Should this basic relation be one of association, whether by marriage, by intussusception, by friendship, or by mortal combat? Caesaropapism shares a common foundation with theocracy — their dispute rages upon a flat battleground. But grace and nature, whether individually or collectively, as in Church and State, do not share a common level of metaphysical reality along which they can interact and react, struggle inimically or harmoniously co-operate. It may be that the Christian faith's basic relation to cultural forms, without some determinate set of which it cannot possibly exist, is found in its role as transformer and redeemer of such forms.<sup>[75]</sup>

The fact that this collective Christian faith, which is the Church, cannot exist without cultural forms, any more than the individual person's faith could exist without humanity, does not mean that such forms are acquired only by means of that process which anthropologists call acculturation. In the history of Christianity certain cultural forms previously extant and

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<sup>73</sup> In Dewart's sense of "one world" there is no notion of uniformity.

<sup>74</sup> Note that Dewart does not address the *politically* narrow issue of "Church and State," addresses the larger *human* issue of "Church and the World."

<sup>75</sup> In this reference to culture, as I see it, Dewart has anticipated the particular shift to culture in theology that has become dominant since Vatican II in most Catholic universities.

established, namely, the Greek and Roman, were appropriated and transformed by acculturation. By adopting them, hallowing and baptizing them, Christianity acquired a Hellenic complex. But now it has wrung them dry: In virtue of its very success in developing and transforming these cultural forms they have become inadequate for the continued life and development of the Christian faith. The Christian crisis of this age, thus, is definable in terms of the inadequacies of the Hellenic complex. <sup>[76]</sup>

Moreover, there would be little point, even if it were possible, in turning to other extant cultural forms. The time has come, therefore, for Christianity to create its own cultural forms. <sup>[77]</sup> No doubt, this creation, required by the development of our history, demands by its very nature continuity with tradition: There is no material out of which to create the Christian cultural forms of the future except our past and our history. But the continuity of this creative process with the past should not in the slightest detract from its being a process or from its being creative. <sup>[78]</sup>

Perhaps, then there are good reasons and legitimate bases for Christianity's participation in the public life of the city. If so, then it may be possible to suggest that it is not only insofar as the Christian citizen is an individual Christian and an individual citizen that the thermonuclear age offers him a political

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<sup>76</sup> An earlier Protestant theologian Auguste Sabatier introduces the issues this way: "In breaking the authority of the Church, the Reformers broke up the basis on which those ancient dogmas had been built. In appealing to the Word of God against traditional doctrines, they at least called in question the Dogmatics of the Councils. After protesting against all the infiltrations of pagan manners and superstitions into the morals of the Church, into its organization and its hierarchy, into its worship and its rites, why should they regard as sacrosanct the ancient philosophy which had entered into the constitution of its dogmas?" (Sabatier, 1897:253).

<sup>77</sup> Ultimately, Dewart will abandon this cultural (political) approach and concentrate on reforming the traditional approach within Western philosophy.

<sup>78</sup> Here, Dewart means creative in the sense of *homo faber*, not *homo creator*. That is to say that humanity cannot create "some thing" out of "no thing."



vocation. <sup>[79]</sup> It may be that to make peace, to work toward the making of an unprecedented world without war and, thus, to begin to create a united, catholic world under the sponsorship of the Catholic faith, is the political vocation offered by history to collective *ecclesiastical* Christianity in our time. <sup>[80]</sup>

Finally, in this connection, an immediately practical remark.

I have tried to show in my account of the Cuban revolution that though it is as unnecessary as it is impossible to try to allot the guilt among the parties responsible for the Cuban tragedy, it may be important to understand the various roles played by the different protagonists. In a sense, as we have seen, it could be said that the decisive role may have been played by the Catholic Church. But within the whole Cuban Church it seems to me that the most decisive role, at least in what pertains to lack of initiative, was played by Catholic laymen. And within the laity it was the Catholic intellectuals that failed most completely of all. <sup>[81]</sup>

(p. 288/89)

Now, I have tried to show that the world problem of the Universal Church is not essentially different from that of the Cuban Church, except that it is considerably more complex. It involves the whole temporal order, not only or even primarily (though perhaps most urgently) the political. It is not only the things that are Caesar's that need the revaluation that only Christian respect for them can provide: It is the whole range of the things of nature and the things of man that must be revalued by the

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<sup>79</sup> The thermonuclear age was of major political concern at the time Dewart wrote these words. I suggest his thoughts may be adapted accordingly by those now concerned with and living in our "digital cultural" age.

<sup>80</sup> 'Ecclesiastical' is to be contrasted with 'ecclesial,' a term introduced through the theology of Vatican II. The former is quantitative; the latter qualitative. Uncharacteristically, here Dewart seems to be arguing for some form of "super church."

<sup>81</sup> That persons fail, not institutions, continues a theme that is evident throughout Dewart's works.

Christian's veneration and love of them. <sup>[82]</sup> Christianity cannot hate the world or condemn the times. We already believe that, but our fears and our delusions of persecution prevent us from following through even in our own minds. <sup>[83]</sup>

(p. 286-91)

[Footnote 4 in text] John XXIII's opening address to the Second Vatican Council proposed that "the Church should never depart from the sacred patrimony of truth received from the Fathers; but at the same time she must ever look to the present, to new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world, which have opened new avenues to the Catholic apostolate. Our duty is not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and *without* fear to that work which our era demands of us. One thing is the substance of the ancient doctrine of the *depositum* fidei, and another is the way in which it is presented." The question may be controverted whether this means no more than the use of new words, and nothing but new words, to recast the same truth, or whether it also means the recasting of the same truth in new cultural forms of which new words are only a secondary and perhaps even trivial aspect. <sup>[84]</sup>

Freedom of Catholic thought and expression is not in danger today from flaming faggots on the town square, but from dry rot in

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<sup>82</sup> While not always apparent, Dewart does hold to the unique perspective of Christian belief, even in his later works.

<sup>83</sup> A similar sentiment is expressed by Sabatier from within his tradition: "No one nowadays underestimates the social importance of the religious question. Philosophers, moralists, politicians, show themselves to be alive to it; they see it dominating all others, whose solution, in the end, it may prevent or decide" (Sabatier, 1897:xii).

<sup>84</sup> Dewart will pursue the understanding of the use of "new words" to "recast the same truth" particularly in his *Evolution and Consciousness*.

university halls. <sup>[85]</sup>

It would be self-contradictory in a Catholic Church, which precisely as Catholic and as Church is the depositary of the Christian faith, if the burden for the realization of the mission of the Church to anoint, to consecrate the world in actual existence and not merely in vows, did not fall upon all the faithful. <sup>[86]</sup> Yet, we tend to think of the Church in the third person, as they or as she. Well, the Church is never they. And the metaphoric motherhood of the Church refers only to the reality that she is the carrier and reproducer of supernatural life, the bearer of faith: she is by her collectivity and society the nurse of our belief. <sup>[87]</sup> But the ontological reality is that it is not something or someone else: We are the Church. <sup>[88]</sup>

Christian intellectuals, however, have a special responsibility in regard to that mission, since the self-realization of Christianity can be brought about only through self-consciousness and this in turn is a matter of reflection, of knowledge, of taking thought. <sup>[89]</sup> We do not need so much new exhortations to practice justice as we do, for instance, a more accurate, more extensive, more intelligent, more faithful, and truer appreciation of the history of the Church by the generality of Christians. What is the point of knowing the catechism's definition of faith if we do not suspect either faith's historical or its social dimension? <sup>[90]</sup> We do not need so much an exclusive conviction that grace is caused by a sensible efficacious sign as we need to realize more fully that the sacraments have an

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<sup>85</sup> This, I believe, is a conviction Dewart never totally abandoned throughout his career. (Personally, I have known senior Protestant academics to hold the same belief).

<sup>86</sup> This theme, the responsibility of the faithful, is treated thoroughly by the Vatican II theologians.

<sup>87</sup> Clearly, this statement is in accord with the theology of the Byzantine churches, Catholic and Orthodox.

<sup>88</sup> A further affirmation of Dewart's philosophical emphasis on the person.

<sup>89</sup> Dewart will develop his train of thought critically, especially with respect to Christian intellectuals, at greater length in later books.

<sup>90</sup> A proper understanding of history, along with a proper understanding of evolution, will become major points of departure in the development of Dewart's thought.

essentially worshipful, liturgical function — or as we need, even more basically, imaginative studies of the relations of nature and grace in which it is not taken for granted that nature must be understood by the Christian as the *phusis* of the Greeks.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Such “imaginative studies of the relations of nature and grace” have been undertaken by Sabatier in a non-Hellenic fashion. “I have endeavoured to develop a series of connected and progressive views which I do not wish to be regarded as a system, but as the rigid application and the first fruits of the method of strictly psychological and historical observation that for years I have applied to this species of studies” (Sabatier, 1897:xi).

***THE FUTURE OF BELIEF***  
***Theism in a World Come of Age***  
**(1966)**

(p. 32, n. 23/ p. 33)

The ontological perfection of man, his free and self-creative coming-into-being, overflows into moral perfection because man does his existing in the presence of God. <sup>[92]</sup> What man makes himself to be, therefore, places him in a certain existential situation in relation to God. Man's purposiveness and striving, thus, reside in his seeking creatively, not to be *happy*, but to *be*. <sup>[93]</sup> The Christian doctrine of grace can be totally integrated with this idea if we keep in mind that the free self-creation of man takes place in the presence of God not only insofar as it constitutes man's *final* achievement, but also insofar as it constitutes his constant, *present* being. (In Scholasticism, if man were immortal and remained on earth forever, morality would be very difficult to understand). Man's present self-creation takes place in the presence of God as communicating himself to man. <sup>[94]</sup> Thus, in opposition to Scholasticism this concept of morality, but in opposition to certain contemporary philosophies it stresses that the present self-creation of man takes place in the presence of God, so that we are judged according to what we make of ourselves, not in the sense that our final achievement is measured by an ideal standard, but in the sense what we do make of ourselves does make a real difference to our moral relations with God.

(p. 44)

The Christian can equate intelligibility and necessity (and, thus,

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<sup>92</sup> For Dewart, human ontological perfection is an on-going activity. It is not a static state of ideal perfection.

<sup>93</sup> Being, in fact, is the object of consciousness for Dewart since being needs to be *some thing*. When consciousness is its own object it is ontologically perfect.

<sup>94</sup> What God contributes to man is life (God's own self) not a description or ideal image of what God may be like.

adopt a hellenic philosophical viewpoint) only as long as he also understands becoming in a consequent manner, that is, as long as he conceives becoming as the act of (actually potential) being. But if he understood becoming as the act of (non-being) coming-into-being, that is, as the act of something "coming" (or, rather, being) *from nothing*, (which he must do if evolution and development are to be understood, in turn, as the emergence of something which is not ultimately reducible to its antecedents), <sup>[95]</sup> the identification of intelligibility and necessity would necessarily lead to conclusions which, as I believe, could not be subsumed under Christian belief (for example, the evolutionary nature of God and his pantheistic identification with nature). <sup>[96]</sup> The reluctance of Catholic speculation to accept the concept of evolution except in carefully delimited (and occasionally mystifying) respects, may be accounted for by (a) its conscious or unconscious assumption of the incompatibility I have just described, and (b) its simultaneous conscious or unconscious disposition to *retain* as an absolutely basic philosophical principle the hellenic identification of intelligibility and necessity (and indeed, the identification of these two with being as such). <sup>[97]</sup>

(p. 68)

That the Christian faith must be, under pain of idolatry, painstakingly self-critical; that in the Christian tradition, *which* God we believe in is of the utmost importance; and that the Christian faith requires us, under pain of infidelity, to profess *atheism* in relation to every false God. This means that the Christian faith is *both* belief and disbelief. It requires conscious separation of that in which we must, from that in which we must

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<sup>95</sup> That products of evolution are not reducible to their antecedents is an advancement over Sabatier's understanding of evolution which accepts such reducibility.

<sup>96</sup> In short, God does not evolve. But the process of evolution occurs *within* God (i.e., life).

<sup>97</sup> If there is such a state as philosophical error, to identify intelligibility with necessity is an example of it, for Dewart.

not, believe. <sup>[98]</sup>

(p. 70)

We cannot without idolatry believe in anything or anyone else in the same way in which we believe in God. It means that the Christian faith excludes *belief* in the truth of belief. This is why faith seeks to surpass itself precisely as faith. That is, it seeks what it has not, and insofar as it seeks truth it speculates. In any event, the point is that the Christian is not permitted to have faith in faith: he may have faith only in God. <sup>[99]</sup>

(p. 71)

Christianity enjoys the doubtful distinction of being the only higher religion to have become preoccupied with the existence of God to the extent of having neglected his reality. That it so neglected it is the true meaning of the defection of the working class, the secularization of the culture and apostasy of science, and it is evident from the history of the Church's attitude to social, political and scientific questions. Christianity is the only religion to have generated religious atheism within itself. <sup>[100]</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> That is, the Christian thinker must be a critical thinker, according to Dewart. There is no necessity within humanity for credulity.

<sup>99</sup> That is to say, strictly speaking, the Christian is to believe only *in* God, not in any attestations *about* God which are meant to demonstrate and affirm one's belief in God.

<sup>100</sup> What this suggests about the Western mind, or Western method of philosophizing, is significant. Does atheism, as an historical phenomenon, which did not arise in the East, suggest an essential difference in the composition of the human brain/mind relationship, between Asians and non-Asians? Given sufficient cultural development would atheism have occurred in the East as well? Is the phenomenon of atheism related to the structure of the brain as an organ (as reductionists might have it) or only related to the thinking function of the organ, that is, philosophical reasoning?

(p. 78)

The sense is that the dogma itself does not in any real sense change, although its articulation becomes more complex.<sup>[101]</sup> There appears to have been relatively little departure from this fundamental understanding of the matter during the later middle ages. When Bossuet in the seventeenth century contrasted the immutability of Catholic doctrine with Protestant variability, he may have been emphasizing an aspect of the Thomistic doctrine in which St. Thomas took little interest, but he was hardly departing from the common position of mediaeval theology. The gradual conviction has arisen that Christian dogma must be said *in some real sense* to develop and, indeed, to have been developing since earliest times.<sup>[102]</sup> I underscore this: the fact of which we have recently become aware is not that Christian doctrine has begun to develop in recent times, but that it has *always* existed in a process of development. It is only the awareness of this fact that is new. This bears emphasis because it serves to raise this question: Why should Christianity at a certain point of its history, and not before, have become aware of a fact about itself which had always been

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<sup>101</sup> This sense of not changing could be attributed to thinking that is characteristic of the Protestant tradition which touches upon authority in the relationship between Church and State. Sabatier has noted: "It would not be enough to say that a religious society has a dogma as a political society has laws. For the first, it is a much greater necessity. Moral societies not only need to be governed; they need to define themselves and to explain their *raison d'être*. Now, they can only do this in their dogma" (Sabatier, 1897:229).

<sup>102</sup> Sabatier's understanding of the genesis of dogma broke some philosophical ground which Dewart saw fit to till further. "The Church chooses and formulates a definition of the point concerned: it enacts it as the adequate expression of its faith, and sanctions it with all its objective authority: dogma is born. This long evolution is fully justified in the eyes of reason. It is the movement of the mind as legitimate as it is necessary. It is possible to be mistaken as to the nature, origin, and value of dogma, but not as to its necessity. The Church may make a different use of it in the future, but it will not be able to dispense with it, for the doctrinal form of religion answers to an imperative need of the epoch of intellectual growth at which we have arrived. No one can either reverse or arrest its development" (Sabatier, 1897:238).



so? <sup>[103]</sup>

(p. 79)

The *post-facto* awareness of one's development is not peculiar to Christianity: it is a property of human nature. It can be no coincidence that Christianity reached this awareness concerning itself at the same time that mankind reached the same awareness of its own historicity and its evolutionary nature in every other respect. As man has become historically minded — as he has learned that time is not a reality external to him in relation to which he endures, but rather an essential constituent of his own reality man has found the understanding of his past history indispensable for the understanding of his present reality and for the adequacy of his self-projection into the future. <sup>[104]</sup>

(p. 82)

The most basic doubt that cannot possibly be entertained (not merely in good logic, as with Descartes' impossibility of doubting that *I think* — but even in lived experience) is the doubt that I might be an other than myself. The fundamental empirical (and not merely logical) fact of philosophy is not *cogito*, but *sum*. <sup>[105]</sup> The same fact with but slightly different emphases could be formulated in other ways. *Cogito* may be accepted if it means not *I think* but *I am conscious*; or better still, *consciousness (exists)*, in order to

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<sup>103</sup> Dewart's interest lies in the "cause" of this delay in human consciousness and philosophy's role in (or as) that cause.

<sup>104</sup> Dewart understands history as revealing the relationship between time and reality, not only time and beings, such that beings are discrete examples of a concrete reality that exist within time, and come into being, and will cease to be (exist) at some point in the future. That is to say, beings are subject to time; reality is not.

<sup>105</sup> Presuming a healthy mind, not subject to pathological influence, an individual may doubt the accuracy (truth) of acquired knowledge, but not his or her self-existence. The fiction of the non-existence of the self is not philosophically possible, according to Dewart. Psychologically understood, the acceptance of the non-existence of oneself becomes a pathological problem.

signify that the self is not a Cartesian, Kantian or Hegelian transcendent *ego* originally isolated from the world and underlying the mind’s awareness of the world. <sup>[106]</sup>

(p. 99)

Revelation has not ended and indeed never shall as long as God continues to deal personally with man and be present to human history. For we should not suppose that the fullness of God’s self-revelation in Jesus means that God’s self-revelation ceased at a certain point in time, after which we no longer enjoy the revealing presence of God, but only the record of the revelation completed in the past. <sup>[107]</sup>

(p. 102)

Consciousness is not an essentially and originally private event afterwards communicated (through signs) to other human beings. Its essential privacy and its originally personal nature are strictly relative to its essentially public and originally social and historical nature. The only truth to the idea that human experience is originally private is that before he became human man was an animal. But now that he is a social animal — that is, now that he is not an animal at all — his *human* experience is essentially and originally a social event. Conceptualization is the socio-historical process by which consciousness, and man as such, evolve. <sup>[108]</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> For Dewart the “mind’s awareness of the world” remains a philosophical issue, not a psychological one.

<sup>107</sup> Thus, revelation is the causal activity, Dewart maintains. The historical documents (the scriptures) have no causal effect in the present moment.

<sup>108</sup> For Dewart, humans have the ability to fashion concepts from their consciousness (which infra-human life cannot do) and this capacity specifies their humanity. This notion is to be contrasted with the scholastic understanding that reason specifies humanity. In short, “man the thinking animal” characteristic of classical humanity, does not specify contemporary humanity. Hastily and uncritically one might jump to suggesting that computers are “thinking machines,” but this would be to misinterpret Dewart’s intent.

(p.106/07)

It might be objected that the perfection of societies does not necessarily go together with the development of language. On the contrary, it might be suggested that they do. But we should not restrict our concept of language to its most elementary and everyday forms. For instance, political organization is a system of linguistic behavior. And science is really scientific thinking, scientific language. For “talking” is the human way to relate human existence to reality (including that of other human beings). The scientist is a man who can talk scientifically about the world, that is, a man placed in a certain existential situation which relates him scientifically to the world. This is why science confers power on man. *It is not because* “the secrets of nature” having been wrested from her, nature can be black-mailed at will. It is, on the contrary, because science helps man establish friendly relations with nature. <sup>[109]</sup> We can manage the world (or ourselves) physically only to the degree that we manage it (or ourselves) conceptually. In short, the development of human consciousness means the development of concepts and conceptual systems. Man develops culturally in order to exist. <sup>[110]</sup>

(p. 109)

In sum: to master the “language” of contemporary experience is in reality to think in contemporary concepts — and to think in new

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<sup>109</sup> Science “levels the playing field,” as it were, in that it places humanity “on an equal footing” with the rest of nature and as a result humanity has no need to continue with placating mythological gods, etc. to ensure its survival. Relations with nature become friendly, not adversarial. Ironically, however, particularly within medicine, science still speaks of “combating” nature to cure disease and even overcome death. Christians hold the latter to be accomplished only via faith in Jesus Christ, (1 Corinthians: 15:26.)

<sup>110</sup> That is to say, according to Dewart, humanity “makes its own home” in the universe through cultural concepts.

concepts is to develop one's original experience <sup>[111]</sup>

(p. 110)

Although truth is not the adequation of the *intellect* to *being* (insofar as understanding consists in the assimilation of being by the formal mediation of concepts), truth might nevertheless be called an adequation of *man* to *reality*, in the sense that it is *man's self-achievement* within the requirements of *a given situation*. We can call it an adequation provided we keep in mind that since man as such has the reality of being, adequation is not the human substance's transition from non-being to being in the accidental order of cognition. In this context *adequation* would not connote *conformity*, *correspondence*, *likeness* or *similarity*. It would connote adjustment, usefulness, expediency, proficiency, sufficiency and adaptation. The establishment of man's relation of truth to reality can only be an intensification of the reality that man *already* has. <sup>[112]</sup>

(p. 119)

The theory of development sketched here attempts to account not only for the possible future development of dogma, although its most immediate practical usefulness, if valid, would be to render possible a consciously undertaken programme of doctrinal development. We must speak of a real *transformation* of the Christian consciousness as it realized itself culturally and historically. <sup>[113]</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> This theme will be developed in later works, particularly *Evolution and Consciousness: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature*.

<sup>112</sup> Note that in the duality of humanity and being (not the dualism of intellect and being) there is no gap to be overcome such as there is in Hellenic dualism.

<sup>113</sup> For Dewart, an indication of the successful "transformation of the Christian consciousness" would be the recognition of the necessity of dogmatic development, a recognition he does not hold to be in the immediate future of the church's magisterium.

(p. 121)

This might be put more graphically in an epigram: we can search for the essence of Christianity behind its cultural manifestations only as long as we assume either that we can become conscious of God's self-revelation without God's use of any human language (Modernism), or else that God's mother tongues are Hebrew and Greek (Scholasticism).<sup>[114]</sup>

(p. 145)

I do not mean that the Christian pedestrian's concept of God must necessarily be cruder than that of the Christian theoretician. I merely suggest that this happens unavoidably (and regrettably) once the concept of God is hellenized. For as it becomes hellenized it becomes metaphysical, and metaphysical thinking requires the training and education that only relatively few can afford. Under a different cultural form Christianity might once again make belief the fountainhead and inspiration of theological speculation, not the other way about. This would entail, of course, a de-hellenization and a re-conceptualization of *enquiry*, *speculation* and *theory* so as to prevent their severance from common experience. Christian theology and philosophy would then cease to be "academic" subjects, and theological enquiry would once again take place predominantly within the public, everyday, real life of the whole Church.<sup>[115]</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> My contention, to this day, is that failures in the "search for the essence of Christianity" as it has been undertaken in the West are due to the unresolved philosophical issues of Modernism. The failure is perpetuated by the use of an inadequate philosophy given the contemporary questions arising from experience.

<sup>115</sup> I suggest that the contemporary reader not consider this paragraph as merely applicable to the inherited academic tradition that Dewart recognized. More than a merely different cultural form is implied here. That is, human life as lived in our digital world cannot be reduced to any of its antecedents. Humanity lives literally within a "new world understanding" which cannot be confined in any one cultural form.

(pp. 155-58)

In brief, the Scholastic modification of Greek metaphysics in order to bring it into line with the Christian faith, consisted in the twofold doctrine that (a) there is in creatures a real distinction between essence and existence, but (b) in God essence and existence are identically the same. For the doctrine that there is in God *no real* distinction between essence and existence implies that nonetheless there is a *conceptual* distinction between them. We *cannot* empirically intuit the real indistinction of essence and existence in God. We *must* nonetheless conceive the two as distinct. There is, therefore, an unbridgeable difference between the way in which God is *in himself* and the way in which he is *in our knowledge*. Whichever way we approach it, it is the conceptual distinction, not the real identity, that matters for philosophy's answer to the question whether *God* exists. <sup>[116]</sup>

(p. 171/72)

Nowhere in this essay would I want to stress the tentative and exploratory character of my remarks more than in my attempt to answer this question. All history, but very specially perhaps Christian history, is freely and spontaneously made by the creative forces generated by man's interrelations with the ultimate reality, God. <sup>[117]</sup> For this reason, history is radically unforeseeable. Nevertheless, what is radically unforeseeable may well be empirically predictable: though we may not say what final goal we are bound to arrive at, we can determine in which direction we are already going. We can forecast what points we are likely to

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<sup>116</sup> In other words, within scholastic philosophy, God's real identity is inaccessible. Therefore, according to Dewart's perspective there is no uniquely privileged conceptual approach to understanding God, although some theologians may attempt to identify one.

<sup>117</sup> God is not an ultimate *being* for Dewart. But Dewart's God, understood as ultimate *reality* (an understanding arising from the process of dehellenization) presents its own set of philosophical difficulties according to Robert Prentice. These have been identified and thoroughly discussed by Prentice (1971).

traverse, on the basis of the decisions we have already taken and on the assumption that we will follow them through. <sup>[118]</sup>

(p. 172/73)

I will not deal here with Protestant Christianity, a subject apart. But the Catholic Church in recent years has freely taken certain basic decisions which, to be sure, are in principle reversible, but which for the present remain a defining point of its orientation. The principal one was manifested most clearly, perhaps, in a general acceptance by the Church of the directive contained in Pope John’s opening address to Vatican II. It was the decision to adopt a historical perspective: to “look to the present, to new conditions and new forms of life, to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us” (Toronto Globe & Mail, October 12, 1962). In the single moment of unhesitating acclamation with which this proposal was greeted — even if not a few among those who subscribed it were possibly not fully conscious of its ultimate import — the, reversal took place of a policy which Christianity unconsciously began to develop at some time between the days of patristic hellenism and the age of medieval Scholasticism, and which had been implicitly espoused since the beginning of the sixteenth century and consciously abided by since the end of the eighteenth. This policy was, for the sake of protecting the truth and purity of the Christian faith, to resist the factual reality, and to deny the moral validity, of the historical development of man’s self-consciousness, especially as revealed in cultural evolution. In the person John XXIII the Catholic Church made an act of faith in the precisely opposite idea:

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<sup>118</sup> This is the proper reason to study history according to Dewart, that is, to see how we arrived where we are, not as a chronology of facts or events. Sabatier expressed the same understanding within his evangelical tradition. “I shall endeavour to show how Christianity, always borrowing its forms from the environment in which it realises itself, after enduring them for a time, subsequently frees itself from and triumphs over the inferior and temporary elements which fetter it, and manifests from age to age a greater independence and a purer and higher spirituality” (Sabatier, 1897:180).

that the truth of Christianity needs for its health, protection and development the reality of man's individual and cultural growth in self-consciousness. <sup>[119]</sup>

(p. 190)

The question is: what can (and what, if anything, cannot) happen, once God and man enter into personal relations. The problem is not how to explain a metaphysical property of God which would have implications for us, but how to understand the reciprocal relations between man and God and, in particular, how mutual power enters into the relationship. <sup>[120]</sup> The problem has to do, as it were, with the politics of man and God

(p. 192)

If a Christian looks at the world and understands nature through hellenic eyes, he will find it necessary to assert the omnipotence of God *over* and *against* nature. For in this view of nature, either God is necessitated by it, or it is subject to God. But in the contemporary experience nature is no longer understood as the principle which necessitates from within the operations of beings, and therefore makes them resist violence from without. We do not see nature as the source of independence and self-sufficiency which it was for Aristotle. Therefore, God does not have power *over* nature. The reason is that nature does not as such

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<sup>119</sup> It appears that humanity's self-consciousness had not occurred to Sabatier in his understanding of dogma. Dogma remains objective and "in the strictest sense, is one or more doctrinal propositions which, in a religious society, and as the result of the decisions of the competent authority, have become the object of faith, and the rule of belief and practice" (Sabatier, 1897:229). A further note: Dewart has not contradicted himself. In this passage, an "act of faith in the precisely opposite idea," connotes a relative, not absolute sense as is required for faith in God.

<sup>120</sup> To my mind, the words "mutual power" open the possibility of an understanding of "co-creatorship" arising from within Dewart's philosophical perspective.



resist him. <sup>[121]</sup>

The same idea might be put paradoxically: the God who is not being but who is present to being is much more powerful than if he were merely the omnipotent being. For instead of holding back a power reserve with which he could, whenever necessary, bend nature’s refractory will, God communicates his power to nature and so creates a nature that is of itself compliant with his will. But even this formula is grossly inadequate. It speaks of God’s *will* and nature’s *compliance*, which connote opposed finalities. Let us rather say that nature does not have its own natural finalities independently of God’s. <sup>[122]</sup>

(p. 193)

The case is not that God can do the impossible (that is, that God has power to do that which nature cannot do), but that for God all things are possible — and that therefore with God all things are possible to man. In God nature can do *anything*. Instead of God’s omnipotence, the power to overrule nature, it might be more adequate to think of the radical openness of history — an openness which not even man’s freedom can annihilate — as manifesting the true extent of the “word” that is possible with God. The moral implication of this is that once it no longer has “God’s omnipotence” to fall back on, our Christian conscience may be awakened to feel its adult responsibilities for taking the full initiative in “restoring all things in Christ” and for exercising its creative ingenuity in order to determine how this should be done.

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<sup>121</sup> This principle challenges the adversarial principle common within the Roman Catholic tradition, and which is evident from the sacrament of baptism through to the annulment of a marriage.

<sup>122</sup> Unity, as it preserves the duality of God and nature, is Dewart’s intention here. Note that he did not say “union.” Yet, he is not promoting any form of pantheism or panentheism. This notion of Dewart’s could not have arisen within a Hellenistic philosophical perspective.

(p. 196)

In a word, there is no “divine plan.” For God’s “omnipotence” not only means that all history is possible, it also means that all history is *free*. <sup>[123]</sup>

(p. 198)

Conversely, man’s total freedom to create history can be guaranteed only by the admission of God’s historical presence to human history.

(p. 200)

But as Christian theism is dehellenized the Christian faith may recast the meaning of religion in terms that do not at all imply God’s ascendancy over man, or man’s submission to God. <sup>[124]</sup>

(p. 205)

We may yet judge that we have not sufficiently well appreciated in the past that to place God at the summit of creation is to place him in an insufficiently noble station in the world. To say that God is the highest and the first being, and that he has to the infinite degree all the creaturely perfections, may not be nearly enough to begin to approximate the transcendent reality of God. To multiply infinities is not the way to transcend them. <sup>[125]</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> That is to say, as I understand Dewart, any “plan” that may be put in place will be a joint effort between God and humanity.

<sup>124</sup> Christian faith may assign a meaning to religion that resembles the non-dualistic (pagan) Eastern philosophies in their approach to life.

<sup>125</sup> This view follows from Dewart’s conviction that reality is that mysterious (transcendent) unknown, beyond being, which communicates itself to being and thus becomes “known” to human beings. Thus, hierarchical ontology may not be the only understanding that expresses God’s nobility.

(p. 205/06)

[God] seems rather to rule himself by the principle of noblesse oblige, so that being the noblest he is also the humblest reality, not having hesitated to give man the freedom that renders him capable of true personal friendship and partnership in the creation of history and world. Worship might be better understood as the rendering of ourselves present to the presence of God, whether in the interior prayer which sends no message to God but which receives his presence, or in the public and common ceremonies which visibly, audibly and sensibly unite us through our collective presence to each other in the presence of the present God. <sup>[126]</sup>

(p. 209/10)

In recent times, as philosophy has diverged more and more from its Greek presuppositions, and as nature and essence have ceased to be understood as intelligible necessities, the concept of the supernatural has lost its usefulness for Christian theism. This is one concrete reason why, as I have already suggested, since the mainstream of Catholic *philosophy* has remained Scholastic and hence unsympathetic to the contemporary understanding of nature, Catholic theology, especially in those circles that have consciously abandoned Scholasticism (for example, the Teilhardians), or in those specialties that were never dominated by it (for example, in scriptural studies), has increasingly turned to non-Christian, secular thought for philosophical help. <sup>[127]</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Sabatier has suggested the same from his perspective. "It is not surprising, therefore, that prayer should, in its turn, be transformed, and that, having at first been the most violently interested act of life, it should come in the end to be a pure act of trust and self-abandonment, of disinterestedness the most religious and complete. ... The essential thing is not to multiply petitions, but to live near Him and feel Him ever near" (Sabatier, 1897:112). In short, for Sabatier God is immanent in human experience.

<sup>127</sup> Dewart never says that philosophy was an erroneous choice for Christian theism, but that it lost its usefulness to express Christian theism over time. In the wake of this loss, Catholic theology replaced classical philosophy with other interpretive disciplines which have their roots in Protestant thought. Sabatier

(p. 211/12)

Against this background I suggest that in the future we may not feel the need to conceive God as a super-natural being. If we discard the hellenic view of nature, the Christian God no longer must, in order to remain free, gracious and freely self-giving, perform super-natural feats, undertake super-natural functions and roles, or enjoy super-natural status. The traditional Christian faith could then be reasserted under new forms which might make more meaningful and vivid the concepts of grace and charity than the theory of the super-natural has done in the past. In brief, God's grace may be understood as the self-bestowal of the ultimate reality, hence as the source of faith and inspiration, and of existence and creativity, no longer God's cornucopia of immaterial plenty, but the alpha and omega of consciousness and praxis, existence and life. <sup>[128]</sup>

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faced a similar dilemma in his day. He sought a solution through the study of history. "Thus were formulated and established the fundamental dogmas of the Roman Catholic system and of the *old* Protestant system: the supernatural authority of the Church, and the supernatural authority of the Bible, implying, as an inevitable consequence, the infallibility of one or the other. The critical examination of these two dogmas is laid upon us. What method shall we bring to it? Only one is of value to-day — that dictated by the scientific spirit. In the order of the moral sciences, it is the historical and critical method, including at once the testimony of psychology and of history" [my italics] (Sabatier, 1899:xxx).

<sup>128</sup> It is important to understand this paragraph as theoretical in Dewart's mind at the time of writing. It is *in the future* that we may not feel the need to conceive God as a super-natural being. He is not saying that humanity will have no need for God, or that there is no God, as some might hastily and erroneously interpret him. The old faith remains and requires recasting in new forms arising from contemporary human experience. Protestantism, fulfills this role in Sabatier's thought in light of his times and experience. "The pedagogic mission of the Church was to make adult Christians and free men, not men without rule, but Christians having in themselves, in their conscience and their inner life, the supreme rule of their thought and conduct. This new age of autonomy, of firm possession of self, and of internal self-government, is that which Protestantism represents, and it could only commence in modern times — that is to say, with that general movement which, since the end of the Middle Ages, is leading humanity to an ever completer enfranchisement, and rendering it more

***FOUNDATIONS OF BELIEF***

**1969**

Preface

(pp. 11-19)

As its title should convey, this volume gives form to an enquiry which falls within the ambit of that discipline which in Catholic academic circles has long been known as Fundamental Theology but which among Protestant scholars has been more commonly called the Philosophy of Religion. Both these designations have advantages and disadvantages. Fundamental Theology is descriptive enough in some ways, but it overstresses theology — rather, it connotes neither the basically philosophical nature of the style of thinking it demands, nor its historical situation within the philosophical tradition which, to be sure, has always been associated in Western Christendom with theology, but from which it has been distinguished since at least the age of Descartes. The name Philosophy of Religion does at least recall some of these things. On the other hand, it does not lend sufficient emphasis to the specifically theological relations and preoccupations of this order of speculative thought. Philosophical Theology has been occasionally suggested as a third alternative. But this — at least so far as I am concerned — is uncomfortably close to the “natural theology” of neo-Scholasticism. *I believe that* Theological Philosophy, which is my own preference, may be at least as good as any of the more usual expressions, and I hope that this coinage will gain favour and come to fill a useful role in the contemporary Christian academic world. <sup>[129]</sup>

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universally and more individually responsible for its destinies” (Sabatier, 1897: 220).

<sup>129</sup> From my perspective, a “theological philosophy,” is useful in understanding theology because it does not necessarily exclude the notion of God from its deliberations. It appears to be in keeping with the current trend within some academic circles of establishing a new role for philosophy in university disciplines. Thus, a scientific philosophy has a role in understanding science; an historical philosophy a role for understanding history; a literary philosophy a

Not the least benefit to be expected from this appellation may be its aptness for putting in relief the theological task which philosophy should normally and naturally undertake when it is practiced by the Christian intellect. This may be an especially timely reminder to offer to Catholic philosophy today: I do not imagine that Catholic philosophers, generally speaking, consciously believe that all theological problems to which philosophy could make a contribution have already been solved — though a few of them, evidently, implicitly assume precisely that. But it would be a pity if by default or by inertia the Catholic philosophical community were to adopt in practice a position that few of its members (or so I estimate) would care theoretically to espouse.

But whatever the name that may designate its subject best, this enquiry complements that which I undertook in my earlier book *The Future of Belief*. I will, of course, discuss the nature of the problem below in more detail, but I should explain here briefly its relation to my previous work. In *The Future of Belief* I addressed myself to the question: can the Christian faith be deemed truly to develop and unequivocally to evolve (and not merely to change the outer, worn-out garment of its pristine, spotless nudity) even if it is assumed that this faith is *supernatural* and that its object is *revealed*? The question to which I address myself here, however, is more fundamental yet: can the Christian faith be said truly to develop and unequivocally to evolve, on the assumption that this faith is *true*, and that its object is *real*? <sup>[130]</sup> The two enquiries, thus, have a common background, namely, a common Christian faith and a common preoccupation with what I take to be the crucial, real-life problem of Christianity today, namely, whether it will consciously undertake to direct its own evolution, or whether it

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role for understanding literature; a political philosophy a role for understanding politics; and a “philosophy of the digital life” may be understood as digital philosophy.

<sup>130</sup> The Christian faith being supernatural and revealed is true and real but, as classically understood, originates outside the concrete human context. Here Dewart limits the discussion of faith to a deliberately conscious process of evolution and reality within the concrete human context.

will continue to evolve; but at an obsolete rate and in a pre-conscious and, as it were, strictly zoological mode.<sup>[131]</sup> The principal difference, beyond that which I have already noted, namely, that the second question is more fundamental than the first, is that the first is narrower than the second. My earlier publication was synecdochically devoted, in effect, to the future of *Christian* belief, whereas the present one is elliptically concerned with the foundations of *religious* belief.<sup>[132]</sup>

Given the wider compass of the latter, the question may occur to the reader why I do not in this volume mention religious belief outside the Western Christian world.

In reply I must acknowledge that my study is specialized. In a sense, one of the principal conclusions of this book is precisely that in this ecumenical age of man's history a cross-cultural approach to the study of all religion has become indispensable to the understanding and development of any given faith. On the other hand, it is the nature of the question more than the range of the evidence that tends to determine the scope of the reply. My question has to do with the foundations of religious belief, namely, the concepts of *reality* and *truth*. To the extent that my findings may be valid, their provenance from Christian experience should not altogether void their applicability, *mutatis mutandis*, to other forms of religious belief.

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<sup>131</sup> Sabatier has given us a statement of his belief concerning what Dewart calls the "zoological mode." Sabatier wrote: "The first reproach that has been addressed to me is contained in the words 'Naturalistic Evolutionism.' A conception more or less materialistic of the universe is thus attributed to me according to which I should explain all things by the single law of evolution, and end sooner or later by reducing the laws of the moral world to the laws of the physical world. But, here, again, they lose sight of the character of the method that I follow. It leads me to discover in my consciousness the mysterious and real co-existence of a particular cause, which is myself, and of a universal cause, which is God" (Sabatier, 1897:345/46).

<sup>132</sup> The elliptical approach in Dewart's style of writing has caused many readers to be frustrated and to have concluded that he confuses, more than clarifies, philosophical issues. In my undergraduate years, Joanne Dewart (Leslie's wife) alerted me to the possibility of this experience, yet encouraged me to continue following through on Leslie's thinking.

There are, moreover, two other mutually complementary reasons why it is not altogether unfitting that an enquiry about the foundations of religious belief should be approached by the Christian, to begin with, from the viewpoint of the Christian faith itself. The first is that the incipient unification of the human race in a world-wide system of federated civilizations is taking place under the sign of Westernization — this may yet change, but for the foreseeable future it is likely to remain the fact it now is. Thus, Christianity has been willy-nilly thrust in the position of the only likely candidate for the post of world ecumenical religious leadership. The progressive integration of the human community will unavoidably require a measure of eventual religious integration — or at very least synergic co-ordination and interaction among the higher world religions; and if Christianity does not undertake this pursuit, it is possible that no other faith may be in a position to do so. Christianity could profitably begin to train itself toward this eventual role by attempting to understand, in its own terms and from its own inner resources, the nature of the foundation of all religious belief: Christianity must, as it were, universalize itself to itself in the first instance, before it is in a position effectively to discharge its leadership in the universalization of the religious belief of man. <sup>[133]</sup>

The second reason is that, apart from the peculiarities of the contemporary historical situation of *homo sapiens*, Christianity itself has always believed itself to have a call to universalize the religious belief of man. That is why Christianity’s true name is *Catholicism* — I mean, unqualified Catholicism. But I stress that it so aspires, that this is its vocation, because Christians have not

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<sup>133</sup> In his *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, Sabatier noted an early attempt at ‘Christianity’s universalization.’ “A few years ago there assembled in Chicago what the Americans called the Parliament of Religions. The official representatives of all the principle religions of the new world and the old met together under a common feeling of religious brotherhood” (Sabatier, 1897:11). At the time he wrote the presence of the Internet and the degree of its influence on Western civilization, as well as other cultures, was unknown and even unanticipated. Today, Christianity’s role of leadership or “universalization” is diminished and itself needs to be re-evaluated in light of digital democratization.



always realized the eschatological nature of the catholicity of Catholicism. <sup>[134]</sup> Catholicity, is, however, a divine call to contribute to the religious development of the human race, entire and as such; it is, therefore, also Christianity’s undertaking to become worthy of thus serving the interests of man. But this has been frequently mistaken for the exclusiveness of Christian truth, supposedly implying a correspondingly exclusive right to the religious allegiance of every man. In what may well turn out, in the long run, to have been its most consequential and revolutionary doctrine, Vatican II disposed of this view — hopefully once for all:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in [non-Christian] religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed she proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ, “the way, the truth and the life” in whom men find the fullness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (Abbott & Gallagher, 1966:662/63). <sup>[135]</sup>

In a world increasingly characterized by the self-organization of man on a global scale, the catholicity of the Catholic faith must seek the ultimate religious integration of mankind. <sup>[136]</sup> Ultimately there remains the goal of integration (in some valid, however

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<sup>134</sup> The phrase “catholicity of Catholicism” is a phenomenological philosophical one. To Dewart’s mind it transcends the narrower boundaries of the Catholicism of Christendom characteristic of Western culture.

<sup>135</sup> To my mind, I find it significant that Vatican II addressed Sabatier’s questions which were posed in a Protestant context. “What is the relation of the word of God to the Bible? By what sign may we recognize the first and distinguish the second? Further, if there be any word of God outside the Bible, if there has been any revelation of God beyond the limits of the Hebrew people and primitive Christianity — and how can we deny this without denying the worth of religion? — what relation is there to establish, and what synthesis to make, between biblical revelation and the other revelations suited to the various human families?” (Sabatier, 1897:53).

<sup>136</sup> The notion of “the self-organization of man” (individually and collectively) will increasingly occupy the forefront of Dewart’s thinking.

unforeseeable, meaning of the term), with the higher religions of the Far East.

I need hardly stipulate that this is not an immediate prospect, except perhaps for the first step. Nevertheless, the contribution that this book would wish to make keeps very much in mind the more distant possibilities. This is not an idle preoccupation, even at this early date. The rate of human evolution has accelerated to the point that planning must take place on a much longer scale than has been reasonable and sufficiently prudent in the past. In sum, my suggestions concerning the foundations of belief point beyond the narrow circle of Christian belief, even if they begin only within the confines of Christian belief.

I should also preface my work with a caution about the term *meta-metaphysical*, which I have coined with reference to the mode of philosophical thought which alone can, in my opinion, effectively restore the foundations of Christian belief today. I wish to call attention to the adjectival form which I usually give to it. It would be a thorough misunderstanding of my intent if I were attributed the suggestion that there is a distinctive philosophical discipline, or a division or "branch" of philosophy called meta-metaphysical — least of all one which would share with other philosophical divisions like logic, ethics and metaphysics, the totality of philosophical, science. I have not in this book suggested this. What I have suggested is that philosophy today must give itself a meta-metaphysical orientation. I have suggested that philosophy should transcend its metaphysical stage of development and, thus, initiate its meta-metaphysical age. I have even suggested, in a sense, that philosophy develop, as it were, a meta-metaphysical metaphysics. I have above all suggested that Christian philosophical thought in particular should become meta-metaphysical thought. These suggestions may be worthwhile or they may not. They are, at any rate, the suggestions I have actually made. <sup>[137]</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Dewart sees the meta-metaphysical as describing the passing beyond the stage to which the discipline of philosophy has evolved in the Hellenic form. He is not denying an understanding of metaphysics in philosophy, but is suggesting



(p. 47)

The project of redeveloping Christian belief cannot rest either (a) on the traditional philosophical foundations, or (b) on those provided by contemporary thought, as they presently stand.<sup>[138]</sup>

(p. 48, n. 14)

The dehellenization of Christian philosophy was initiated in part by St. Thomas, and complemented in *another part* by contemporary thought. (I say complemented, not completed.) As we shall see, the incompatibility of modern thought with Christian belief stems from the incomplete dehellenization of the former, and is compounded by the retention of Hellenism by the latter. *Contemporary* Christian thought should now complete what St. Thomas only initiated, and should revise what contemporary thought has achieved.<sup>[139]</sup>

(p. 59)

The observation that man relates himself to reality was cast by the Greeks, not in such terms as those I have used here — for example, not in terms of consciousness, or of any Greek equivalent thereof — but in terms of man’s knowledge of the world.<sup>[140]</sup>

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that the next stage of thought, even if it embraces a new understanding of metaphysics, understanding will not be reducible to antecedents, as in classical philosophy.

<sup>138</sup> That is to say the project of redeveloping belief in any philosophical sense for the future will have evolved out of the past (have transcended the past) and presented itself as something new in the history of philosophy. Such a project would not merely be a novel variation on a theme, as it were.

<sup>139</sup> Dewart is no iconoclast. In his thinking he is careful not to exclude the pertinent lessons of the past, yet at the same time, he is prepared to abandon any ideas that have become useless in explaining contemporary experience.

<sup>140</sup> For Dewart “consciousness” will ultimately beg the question of a new understanding of epistemology not framed in Hellenic categories. He does not regard consciousness as reserved to subjective psychological functioning.

(p. 108, n. 44)

I do not mean that there can be no divine agency involved in the development of history, as if “nature” were inwardly necessitated rather than necessitated from without. What I have in mind is that history is not inwardly necessitated, and that therefore the involvement of any divine agency in the course of history cannot be adequately understood as the intervention of divine providence in the course of natural affairs — for the course of “natural” affairs is not such that it can be either interfered with or else left alone to proceed according to its own laws. <sup>[141]</sup>

(p. 113)

What matters, in a word, is whether the contemporary mode of human consciousness is an evolutionary, historical fact. That type of Catholic thinking which would have contemporary human consciousness adjust itself to faith in its traditional form is unrealistic and self-delusive to the point of presumption. For human evolution, the development of human consciousness, cannot be actually stopped, it can at most be slowed down, and it can at worst lose meaningfulness — as it has in point of fact in Western Christendom since the Christian world divided itself against itself into secular and religious halves. Christian belief, however, is a grace and can therefore be altogether lost. <sup>[142]</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> The key word in this paragraph is “necessitated” which is to be understood literally. There is no necessity to history. All occurrences could have been other otherwise, according to Dewart. Therefore, there is no need for the understanding of an external God to change things.

<sup>142</sup> While human consciousness evolves, as Dewart maintains, Christian belief (faith) does not. As gift, belief can be received or rejected; found or lost, but not evolve.

(p. 119)

The progress of the Christian culture has taken place in the absence of conscious Christian belief. <sup>[143]</sup>

(p. 131)

Despite their morphological differences, different languages can be used by man to relate himself to one and the same world; and since none of these languages is more natural to him than any other, it is always possible for him to translate his thinking from one language to another — i.e. to relate himself to reality in a variety of ways which are essentially different (despite the constancy of the world) but mutually transformable (because of the constancy of the world). This alone means, once again, that by thinking man does relate himself to reality, but that thinking is not reduplicative of reality or manipulative of it. <sup>[144]</sup>

(p. 173)

The real dependence of the creature upon God does not consist in the former having received its necessary reality from the latter, but in its having received a reality which is not necessary, even after it has been “received.” <sup>[145]</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> The accuracy of this observation, I suggest, is easily confirmed through reflection on one’s own experience and observation of contemporary culture. I doubt that it needs further demonstration.

<sup>144</sup> For Dewart there is no “grasping” of reality as in the Hellenic sense of reduplication, or manipulation of an object externally present to one’s mind. But, for Sabatier there is. So, he never quite leaves a Hellenic approach. “He who says consciousness says science, or at least, the beginning of science. Consciousness implies a *representation*. In other words, no modification of the ego becomes conscious except by awakening the mind to a *representative* image of the object that has produced it and of the relation of that object to the ego” [my italics] (Sabatier, 1897:273).

<sup>145</sup> Again, Dewart philosophically factors out necessity within his evolutionary thinking. At this point one might ask: in my “life in progress” am I necessarily dependent upon God for anything and everything?

(p. 182, n. 48)

Underneath the professional atheism, as it might be called, of philosophers and scientists in modern times, and of those who are consciously and directly influenced by them, there is a popular atheism or a layman's atheism, as it were, which definitely transcends mere agnosticism, but which usually lacks decisiveness, fervour or militancy. This popular atheism is automatically reached when people draw, more or less consciously, more or less logically, this very conclusion or a practical equivalent thereof: that human existence, however mysterious, is evidently as contingent as man's consciousness of himself, and that therefore it could not come to man from without — least of all from a Necessary Source. In other words, an existent owes its existence to no one but itself, because existence is not the sort of "thing" that can be owing to another — even if it had in point of fact been "received" from another.<sup>[146]</sup>

(p. 186, n. 53)

[That knowledge does not imply existence] seems commonplace enough to those of us who have directly or indirectly retained the metaphysical formation given to Western civilization by mediaeval and modern philosophical thought. But some reflection, even at the non-technical level of common, everyday contemporary thinking, should reveal that this idea is in point of fact totally incredible and contrary to what experience tells us about itself. Any knowledge whatever, at any level whatever, even that of the simplest and least sophisticated apprehension, involves knowledge of the existence of something; what may very well happen is that we may have very little knowledge of *what* that

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<sup>146</sup> Dewart's "popular atheism" translates into a "disenchanted universe," in which many humans at some point in their lives discover themselves, despite having been raised to believe in living within a transcendent mystery. In short, individuals may choose not to believe in a (religious) mystery. In my experience of Western society many thinkers (philosophers) have settled for the secular "puzzle of existence" as a replacement for the "mystery of being."

something is. Conceivably, one might have knowledge of something simply as *something*, or as a *being*, or as a *reality*, though in point of fact most human knowledge, even of the most elementary sort implies a sufficiently complex mode of self-relation to reality to warrant the assertions (a) that we usually know, more or less precisely, what the objects of our cognition are, and (b) that the problem that we usually face is not that of learning in the most elementary way what things are, but that of perfecting our understanding of them. <sup>[147]</sup>

(p. 221)

But, of course, there is a wide difference between being conscious, as man has always been, and his becoming conscious of his own consciousness — for this is the way in which consciousness evolves, namely, by becoming what it already is. <sup>[148]</sup>

(p. 225)

Whether or not extramental things exist, the mind itself cannot know itself except as existing, thus consciousness is not definable

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<sup>147</sup> Here Dewart hints at what consciousness, as an epistemology, might undertake in the process of cognition. Given common sense, we "know" that dragons do not "exist" — in fact, at least. But the significance of the recognition of that imaginative reality for our interpretation of reality could be perfected through a heightening, deepening or expansion of our consciousness in developing the human mind. For Sabatier to "perfect our understanding" of something is to know it religiously. "To know the world as an astronomer or a physicist is not to know it religiously. To know it religiously is, while taking it as it is, and in no wise contradicting the scientific laws according to which it is governed, to determine its value in relation to the life of the spirit; it is to estimate it according as it is a means, a hindrance, or a menace, to the progress of that life" (Sabatier, 1897:310).

<sup>148</sup> Such self-reflection is an evolutionary stage at which humanity has arrived. Infrahuman life has not yet done so and may never do so. Neither outcome in the evolutionary process is necessary in the case of infrahuman life, given Dewart's understanding.

in abstraction from its subjectivity, or in abstraction from the self which is given *in* it and *to* it <sup>[149]</sup>

(p. 227)

To be conscious is to think, or to be able to think, something like: "there it is; here I am." No spatial connotation is intended by these prepositions. We might as well say: "it is it, not I," or "I am I, not it." Nor is the emphasis to be placed on whether the priority of the meaning of the thought is on the *I* which is *not-it*, or on the *it* which is *not-I*. Nor does the most basic element of human consciousness imply any understanding of what *I* am, any more than it necessarily implies any understanding of what *it* is. I might not be able to tell whether that hand there, whose connection or lack of connection with is somehow hidden from sight and from sensation, is or is not part of *me*; but what is always clear is that *it*, whether it be really my hand or someone else's, is essentially distinct from *my act* of knowing it. Thus, I may have to learn experimentally what *I* am, and precisely where *my body* ends and *other bodies* begin. But what I do not need to learn through trial and error, what I do not need to be taught, and what indeed I cannot be taught, because it is an essential part of consciousness which conditions every instance of it, is that the act itself is other than its object. <sup>[150]</sup>

(p. 270)

Right and wrong, true and false, adequate and inadequate: these qualities truly belong to human knowledge. But they belong

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<sup>149</sup> Dewart rejects the classical dualism that tolerates a disembodied spirit. Rather he accepts a phenomenological duality which tolerates a *relationship* between two phenomena, i.e., consciousness and the self and, as well, the human self and its physical body. These pairs are distinguishable, but not separable within phenomenological philosophy.

<sup>150</sup> An example of the duality of consciousness: "I" am not "it." A conscious person does not need to be told that he or she is conscious. Such awareness evolves naturally.



to knowledge only insofar as the self becomes present to itself in and through its presence to the world. Truth and falsity thus pertain neither to subject as such nor to object as such. They pertain to the relation in which we render ourselves present to ourselves and to the world. In a word, they belong to consciousness. <sup>[151]</sup>

(p. 275)

Self no longer means — as classical philosophies would unfortunately conceptualize it — a "subjective," but also an "objective" event. *I exist* is no longer the affirmation of a unique, isolated fact, but the assertion of the reality of being, even while all being is apprehended in relation to myself. The world that should come to be should provide not merely for everybody's need and preferences, but also, as it were, for those of the whole cosmic order, *within* the total reality of which (and *not against* the reality of which) man holds his reality and selfhood. <sup>[152]</sup>

(p. 335)

*The nature of man has changed, because human experience has changed.* <sup>[153]</sup> Human experience is typically not the same today as it was a thousand years or two ago, just as the experience of civilized man over the last ten thousand years has been vastly different from that of primitive, pre-agricultural man. Man has evolved — he has never stopped evolving. The restoration of belief cannot be undertaken except in and through awareness of its

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<sup>151</sup> Consciousness, as philosophical cognition, recognizes the relationships that the mind has formed. The activity of the mind is what, for Dewart, determines right or wrong, true or false, etc.

<sup>152</sup> The self is naturally a part of the cosmos and is "at home" in it. In later works Dewart will continue to develop the significance of this view in contrast to the scholastic tradition which views humanity's true home as "in heaven."

<sup>153</sup> For Dewart human nature is not a substance that undergoes external changes, i.e., the substance and accident understanding of Hellenic philosophy. Rather, it is more like a dynamic movement (life) that is characterized by human consciousness. One might conceive human experience as characterizing an "abiding *humanum*" of an organism.

evolutionary context. But this does not mean: Christianity must reconcile *Genesis* with the Darwinian reconstruction of the appearance of man half to a million years ago or so. It means: Christianity must be relevant to the level of human consciousness achieved by man half to a million years after he appeared on earth, and it must already begin to plan for a mankind which can begin to foresee itself, if not quite another half to a million years hence, at least several hundred years into the time to come. This evolutionary age is only beginning, and we cannot yet tell very much about it. <sup>[154]</sup>

(p. 336)

But we can tell even now that it is a truly different evolutionary process from that of the past, and we can point to some of the ways in which it *is* different from that of the past. Man has been conscious as long as he has been man; but with accelerating speed in modern times — say, the last five centuries or so — he has become increasingly conscious of his consciousness. Therefore, man has learned to re-define himself. But his re-definition of himself is not a substitute for his previous definition of himself, as if he had now learned to define himself correctly after having failed to do so correctly the first time. Man has not simply defined himself a second time: he has re-defined himself for the first time. <sup>[155]</sup>

(p. 337)

The novelty of the latest evolutionary development of man is that human evolution is now beginning to pass into a self-directed

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<sup>154</sup> For Dewart the "evolutionary age" is to be contrasted with the "Hellenistic age" and "classical age" of philosophy. The "evolutionary age" is characterized by the dynamic of life which had not been recognized in the Hellenic or classical philosophical perspectives, although the dynamic was there.

<sup>155</sup> This "first time" re-definition is a product of the evolved consciousness of a posthuman philosophy, not classical philosophy. This re-definition is a unique occurrence in history, and cannot be accounted for by any appeal to antecedents.

stage.<sup>[156]</sup>

(p. 344)

Thus, the “only” change that has taken place in human nature is that man, who has always been conscious, who has always been evolving and, indeed, self-evolving, has now become consciously self-evolving. Or, at very least, he has now become aware that he has long been engaged in self-evolution, and that he may thus now engage consciously and deliberately *in* self-evolution. For the first time man can now do and be what he has always done and been. Does he do this, and is he this, in a *new* way? If by this is meant that human consciousness evolves, then the answer is yes. But, of course, man has always been conscious *since* he became man. To become conscious through the exercise of consciousness is, in this sense, scarcely new to man. Man is an evolutionary process which, having by its own nature become conscious of itself as evolving, can now consciously direct his own evolution. For the evolution *of man* takes place on an incomparably greater scale — indeed, not so much on a greater scale as along an entirely new dimension — than did the evolution *to man*.<sup>[157]</sup>

(p. 362)

If we recognize that philosophical thought truly and creatively develops, the present period in the history of philosophy may be envisaged as a transitional zone beyond which may well lie a new level of progress in the history of religious thought.<sup>[158]</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> “Self-direction” in human evolution has taken the process beyond its Darwinian origins. That is to say humans are the only organisms that freely determine their evolution.

<sup>157</sup> In later works Dewart insists that the evolution *of* man carries responsibilities that the evolution *to* man did not. As human evolution has been characterized by moral activity, posthuman evolution will be characterized by technique (technology).

<sup>158</sup> Sadly, at the present time, I see little interest in philosophers of religion thinking at this level, that is to say, a posthuman level. They prefer to be

(p. 401)

The possibility that we are entertaining here is whether there may not be a reality which is other than being, a reality whose reality is not given by an act of to-be. It is necessary, therefore, to leave also open the possibility of distinguishing semantically between non-reality and non-being. This is not difficult to do: let us use the term non-being to mean the absence of being, not necessarily the absence of reality. *Nothing*, *nothingness*, *un-reality* and *non-reality* may be retained, of course, to signify the absence of reality. *Non-being*, thus, does not mean *nothing*. It means: that which *is not* being. But should there be a real reality other than being, though it would not be being, it would not be *nothing*; it would be *something* real, albeit, *no being* at all. <sup>[159]</sup>

(p. 410)

What St. Thomas could not have very well known is fairly easily accessible to most well-educated persons today. The cultivation of linguistics and of cultural anthropology in recent decades has put us in a favourable position for understanding the world of human experience outside the Indo-European linguistic family well enough to realize that our way of thinking about reality in terms of being is far from universal and, indeed, is almost confined to cultures which share the Indo-European heritage. <sup>[160]</sup>

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custodians of thought and "fine tune" the past, rather than be creative of the future. Sabatier may have been an exception.

<sup>159</sup> Within the present philosophical context, perhaps it is helpful to understand "a real reality other than being" as that which remains un-named, but "there." Such a reality has no status in Hellenic philosophy; but is a phenomenological philosophical concept arising out of experience, rather than conceived by logic.

<sup>160</sup> To my mind, the accuracy of this remark is easily confirmed by anyone who takes the time to review the syllabus of any contemporary Western university. In the future we may expect that the previously presumed universality of Western (Hellenic) thought will face significant challenges from non-European cultures and languages.

***RELIGION, LANGUAGE AND TRUTH*** <sup>[161]</sup>

**1970**

(p. 16)

I believe the Catholic crisis is peculiarly Catholic only in its more superficial (if also in its more spectacular) manifestations. The Catholic crisis can be adequately understood only if it is studied within the context of a wider crisis affecting Christianity as a whole. And, indeed, this crisis may in turn be but part of a yet more fundamental crisis which involves human nature, as a whole, a crisis which should be envisaged, if its true dimensions are to be appreciated, in terms of the processes of human evolution as a whole. <sup>[162]</sup>

(p. 18)

When I refer to the foundations of belief what I have in mind is that all human conscious activity whatever is undergirded by certain assumptions, whether explicit or implicit, about reality and about truth, that is, about the world which exists about man,

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<sup>161</sup> "A recent reviewer of my book, *The Foundations of Belief*, has suggested that I should write a 'short, popular statement of [my] views, so that they may be made available to those [who may not have a professional level of] technical and historical knowledge. I wish I could say that the present book [*Religion, Language and Truth*] responds to this request, but in point of fact it goes only a short distance towards filling it. It is not that the objective does not attract me, but that I would not want to undertake it lightly. It is much more difficult to write for the 'general public' than the specialist, concisely than at length, in outline than in detail. To do the latter requires no more than some knowledge of one's subject: to do the former one must have a mastery of it" (Dewart, 1970:9).

<sup>162</sup> Here, Dewart understands the "Catholic" crisis, not in a traditional sense of a universal denomination, but as a particular denomination. In short, in his thinking he subsumes Catholicism within Christianity, Christianity within human nature and human nature within the evolutionary process. Thus, philosophically speaking, the "universal" is the process of evolution which has led to a fundamental crisis in a posthuman world.

obtruding upon him and constituting his situation and locale, and about man's own relations to that world. <sup>[163]</sup>

(p. 19)

This means that the differences of opinion which operate in this, the gravest religious crisis of the Catholic Church, have at bottom to do not with theological or religious questions as such, but with the epistemological, metaphysical and other philosophical questions which underlie theological and religious disputes.

If Christianity were to take itself for a science, or for a philosophy, or for any other type of wisdom, knowledge or intellectual perfection created by the mind of man, then any conflict created by opposed philosophical or scientific viewpoints would indeed constitute an insurmountable religious division. But Christianity prides itself upon being a "revealed" religion. And however one may otherwise understand the nature of "revelation" there is no disagreement on at least this point: that in some sense or another Christianity derives its "salvific" efficacy, its essential truth, its value and validity as religion, not from the effectiveness of human understanding but from the self-communication of God. <sup>[164]</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> In popular understanding, "foundations" has a sense of "solidity" or fixity." This is not intended in Dewart's understanding of "foundations" for belief. For Dewart, foundations for belief consist in a dynamic understanding which reflects the conscious activity of life.

<sup>164</sup> In other words, for Dewart, the problem is with our understanding of God's communication. Sabatier was of the same opinion concerning God's self-communication and his response was: "Revelation therefore is not a communication once for all of immutable doctrines which only need to be held fast. The object of the revelation of God can only be God Himself, and if a definition must be given of it, it may be said to consist of the creation, the purification, and the progressive clearness of the consciousness of God in Man, — in the individual and in the race" (Sabatier, 1897:35).

(p. 20)

For the resolution of the crisis need not of itself demand any doctrinal or moral compromise on anyone's part. First: not every philosophical or scientific theory is compatible with the truth of revelation; not every vocabulary or cultural context is equally hospitable to the truth of revelation; not every human opinion is tenable in the light of what God has revealed. And since the source of revelation is a higher intellect than man's, it follows that he who is enlightened by faith in revelation is in a position to judge, at least negatively, concerning the truths of human science, philosophy or everyday opinion, insofar as these should manifestly contradict those of revelation. Second: there may be certain human opinions, certain scientific views and, above all, certain philosophical theories and concepts, whose truth may require protection by Christianity, because they are of special relevance to the truth of revelation. Although these philosophical matters remain the proper object of human reason, and may not be said to have been revealed, the truth discovered by human reason in their regard may be affirmed by the believer, not only because it is supported by evidence or experience, but also, once it is supported by evidence or experience, because it is supported by its privileged connection with matters of faith. For since the human truth in question is true and logically necessary in order to uphold truths of faith, to deny this human truth is implicitly to deny the Christian faith in the revelation of God. <sup>[165]</sup>

(p. 22)

The judgment that a certain human opinion is incompatible with the truth of revelation is a judgment about revelation. But it is not revelation; it remains a human judgment about revelation. The

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<sup>165</sup> The relationship between reason and faith is complex. The issue of the "truth discovered by human reason," and that it "is supported by its privileged connection with matters of faith," is not settled here. Although related, ultimately Dewart will maintain that faith does not trump philosophy.

fact that it is about revelation does not make it less human than if it were about anything else.

(p. 24)

Many Catholics today, especially among those in positions of high authority, are, more or less consciously, of the opinion that only the traditional ideas of truth and reality can possibly serve as the foundations of Christian belief and that, therefore, faith dictates a priori the rejection of the possibility of alternatives to traditional Catholic philosophical thought.

(p. 25/26)

The position taken by *Humanae Vitae* is unavoidable once it is granted that sexuality is an especially sacred part of human nature — that is, a part of it which stands aside from all others, and which has a special relationship to the transcendent; or, if you wish, that God has a special interest in sex. The vast majority of Catholics who, retaining their Catholic faith, have decided for themselves in opposition to *Humanae Vitae*, have done so, as best one can estimate, only on the basis of certain novel attitudes towards sexuality. But by and large they seem to have had little hesitation as to how they really felt about the sexual problem itself. The more fundamental difficulty they had to overcome had rather to do with their assessment of their own relationship to the teaching authority of a Church whose doctrine they nevertheless believed to be somehow true.<sup>[166]</sup>

It is, of course, the issue of clerical celibacy, where it is granted on all sides that no absolute doctrinal bar exists to a change in the discipline, that most clearly of all brings out the real problem, namely, that the conflicts of the Catholic crisis are shaped by the most dangerous good faith of all: the good faith of those who

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<sup>166</sup> On a popular level, the real problem is one of overcoming a credulous attitude on the part of the faithful, especially when it is contradicted by experience according to Dewart.



believe that their judgment enjoys special religious prerogatives. <sup>[167]</sup> And this they must believe if, side by side with their faith in the truth and validity of Christianity and in the legitimacy of Church authority, they retain the traditional outlook upon the nature of man and of the world to which man stands bound in the closest relationship.

(p. 78)

When we think "about" the world — that is, when we speak it — we enter into a new relationship with it. But if this is a new relationship, the reason is that there was an old one to begin with: this is the relationship that anything in the world, if it does not think, has to everything else in the world. But this is a sort of passive relationship: it does not consist in relating to, but in being related to (for instance, being close or far, being like or unlike, being better or worse, being a cause or an effect, and so on). To think or talk about the world, however, is to create a relationship to it; man is not merely related to, but self-related to, the world. Thinking is one's becoming related to the world precisely as a self, that is, as that which is not only related to it but knows its relations to it. <sup>[168]</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> I would extend Dewart's "good faith" understanding to the whole question of sexual and gender identity which is of major concern in the contemporary Catholic Church and, indeed, a major concern of humanity. The question may be asked from a posthuman ecclesial (not ecclesiastical) perspective: does an absolute doctrinal bar exist that prevents a change in the traditional sexual discipline and understanding in the Church given the rôle of technique in posthuman culture?

<sup>168</sup> Thinking about the world, then, brings about a qualitative change in the thinker, not merely a quantitative one. The relationship between the organism and the world remains the same until the thinking "self" adjusts the quality of the physical relationship in some manner, not merely through increase, but through deliberately active adjustment in awareness to its concrete reality via posthuman technique.

(p. 84)

The facts are the same for every man, yet the truth is not necessarily the same for all. This is why men disagree on what the facts really are, or on which facts are truly relevant. Indeed, the facts are the same for every creature, but the truth is discovered only by man. The facts drop down from heaven, alike upon the wise and the foolish, the conscious and the brute. <sup>[169]</sup>

(p. 88/89)

The significance of the modern redefinition of language lies in that it entails a redefinition of the nature of nature. He who would understand man must, as it were, adopt the motto: *si naturam requires, circumspecte*. That is, if you wish to understand the nature of man you must look to the world he brings about, you must observe how he transforms whatever lies within his horizon, you must examine how he extends and projects himself outwardly in time and space and, above all, you must discover how he gives a distinctive shape to the indeterminate future and thus brings off the creation of history through his consciousness of that which he thinks and believes and does today. And the same is true, in every fundamental respect, of every other reality. It is true even of the reality of God. <sup>[170]</sup>

(p. 115/16)

People today typically learn — or at least can learn — in a different way than they once did. Hence, the learning role of which

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<sup>169</sup> Thus, the discovery of truth, for Dewart, is a qualitative experience. Truth does not exist independently of experience as the Hellenists would have it.

<sup>170</sup> In other words, human nature is not something added from an external source to an organism. For Dewart, human nature is what the organism makes of itself evidenced through the world it constructs. This could only have happened after the organism became conscious of its self-reflexive ability. For Dewart, humanity constructs "God," or better, constructs novel concepts of God as it enters the posthuman stage of evolution.

most people in our culture are capable today, and to which most people have become more or less consciously accustomed, is not that of accepting the truth, but that of taking an active role in its pursuit and experimental discovery. Truth is a means to the creation of the self. Truth, however speculative and theoretical, has above all a personal dimension. Many people today, even Catholics, suspect this, even if they cannot always conceptualize it to themselves in these terms. But it could therefore be truly said that, in a very real sense, man's capacity for truth has increased. This is, of course, no cause for self-congratulation: it only means that nowadays man must participate more consciously and deliberately in his own self-fashioning than it has been necessary or possible in the past. And the other side of this biological fact is that man's capacity for error, and for evil, is correspondingly greater too. What matters is that man's increased capacity for self-creativity implies a profound shift in the relationship between educator and educand. <sup>[171]</sup>

(p. 121)

Perhaps we should briefly review certain points made above. The long tradition of Western philosophy has construed the mind as an instrument whereby men could acquire spiritually the perfection of other things. Accordingly, knowledge was the inward reduplication of outer reality, and truth was the conformity of the thinking mind to reality. The mind's true knowledge was then expressed outwardly through conventional signs: propositions embodied the truth insofar as they represented the mind's thinking, which in turn represented reality. This view, however, has gradually broken down, and the last century or so has witnessed the gradual emergence of a new way of understanding the mind and its truth. Though there is scarcely unanimity, there is significant

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<sup>171</sup> Ultimately, through this shift in relationship between educator and educand, Dewart will also suggest a shift from the relationship between humanity (as the creature) and God (as the Creator) to a relationship in which humanity is a co-creator in the presence of God. Such a co-creatorship can possibly constitute the existential technique of a posthuman philosophy.

convergence in philosophy towards the view that the human spirit is a self-creative process which fashions itself out of its relations to the world. If so, truth is that quality of consciousness that enables it to exist out of the past, beyond the present, projecting itself into the future. Creative thought has the quality of truth if, emerging from the past, it leads to further creative thought, if it opens up further possibilities for man's self-creation. Thus, truth is that quality of knowledge which accounts for the fact that the more we actually know, the more we potentially know: truth is the enlargement of the horizon of consciousness. <sup>[172]</sup>

(p. 159)

Knowledge is not the conquest of the limitations of self-containment and self-sufficiency; it is a separation which differentiates what is self-contained and self-sufficient out of what is not so; it is not the reduplication of another, but the creation of oneself. <sup>[173]</sup>

(p. 167)

In this and in earlier books I have developed an alternative view of language, reality and truth which may or may not be correct but which is probably not altogether inane. I will not repeat it here, or attempt to show how it avoids the difficulties which plague the traditional corresponding views. I will recall, however, that in my interpretation language does not tell what reality is like, and meaning is not the expression of the cognitive relation of the mind to reality, but the formal condition of the possibility of cognitive self-relation to reality. I meant what I wrote. But *this*

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<sup>172</sup> That is to say, consciousness will have an expanded rôle in posthuman philosophy.

<sup>173</sup> Knowledge is not the overcoming of ignorance, a unification of knower and known. Rather, according to Dewart, it is the introduction of further boundaries between knower and known as the self is created. I suggest that further boundaries will be introduced through the application of an existential posthuman technique (praxis).

does not mean that I intended my words to be a depiction of the world. I intended them to facilitate my own understanding of the world, and hopefully my readers understanding. It is by that standard that I would wish their value to be judged.

***EVOLUTION AND CONSCIOUSNESS***  
***The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of***  
***Human Nature***  
**1989**

(p. xi)

Very few of the observations and concepts I have used in this investigation are original; indeed, most are not even new. What I have tried to accomplish here — the sort of task that philosophy had always deemed among its chief responsibilities, though in the anglophone world as I gather no longer <sup>[174]</sup> — is mainly to arrange a large number of tesserae that, if taken one by one, are very familiar, into the single mosaic of a fairly comprehensive and unconventional philosophical synthesis. <sup>[175]</sup>

(p. 3)

The purpose of this inquiry is to develop a philosophic theory of the origin and the subsequent prehistoric development of the specifically human characteristics of human beings. No justification need be offered for pursuing this objective. If we understood sufficiently well how human nature came into being, we would have mastered why the conditions of human life today are such as they are — which would, of course, facilitate our

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<sup>174</sup> Grant (1969:40) expresses the same sentiment. “The end of ideology ... flatteringly covers the closing down of willing to all content except the desire to make the future by mastery, and the closing down of all thinking which transcends calculation. Within the practical liberalism of our past, techniques could be set within some context other than themselves – even if that context was shallow. We now move towards the position where technological progress becomes itself the sole context within which all that is other to it must attempt to be present.”

<sup>175</sup> Dewart attempts to offer an alternative to the scholastic synthesis, even if it is an unconventional one. As Walter Arnold has noted: “In particular Mr. Dewart’s writings represent the most thoroughgoing alternative within the tradition to the concepts formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas and his revisionists down to the present” (Arnold, 1974:226).

improving them. Undertaking to investigate the matter anew, however, and under philosophic auspices, implies what is much less obvious: that the explanations of human evolution devised so far by science are neither as satisfactory nor as useful as they might be, and that philosophy might help remedy those defects. <sup>[176]</sup>

(p. 5)

I question only the simple extension of the theory to human evolution without sufficient allowance having been made for the peculiarities of human nature; I shall propose instead that the concept of natural selection may be applied to human evolution only if it is first transposed into a human key. But it is too early to discuss any alternative; the prior question is why some sort of alternative should be sought.

Stated concisely before I explain it, my objection to transferring the usual theory to man without qualification is that the natural selection of genes does not actually explain the origin of the specifically human mode of life — not, at least, if by *human life* we mean more than the genetically conditioned physiology of the human organism. Scientists, to their disadvantage, frequently ignore an elementary historical fact: that the ‘new philosophy,’ as science was long referred to, received many of its fundamental concepts from the ‘old’ philosophy, medieval Scholasticism; causality was one of these. The Scholastic idea of causality harked back, in part, to the Old Testament doctrine of creation. According to the Greeks, a cause was a source of ‘necessity’ (anankē), that is, the exertion of a compelling force that brought about change, and without which no change could take place. <sup>[177]</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> To remedy the “defects” of the sciences is a primary purpose of Dewart’s philosophy which he will maintain throughout his career.

<sup>177</sup> The retention of scholastic categories accounts for the defects that arise within contemporary science according to Dewart. For him, necessity does not belong within scientific interpretation. There is always the possibility of things being otherwise, even if only hypothetically. Sabatier presents an account that is in reaction to the scientific understanding of Nature. “The word Nature, which has become so familiar and so indispensable to designate the regular course of

(p. 7)

From the premise that 'no cause can produce existence properly so called save only God,' it follows that although the causal power of created being is enough to effect changes in the world — in the sense that it can bring about a new configuration *of what already exists* — creaturely causes cannot bring about any novelty more radical than such change. In time it would become clear that a world so conceived was not simply a deterministic system, but a closed one. <sup>[178]</sup>

(p. 9)

My point, however, is that the early scientists did not always succeed in segregating faith and reason as strictly as they thought they did; for they did not always realize the religious origin of some of the concepts they took for granted as part of the conventional wisdom of their age. <sup>[179]</sup>

(p. 13)

Philosophy would therefore appreciate that the initial step of a theory of human evolution must be to determine critically and systematically the nature of the humanity of man. And philosophy

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things, does not exist in primitive languages. One does not meet with it even in the language of the Old Testament. This is because the conception it represents only came into existence later, and by a slow and laborious process, in the philosophy of the Greeks. The cosmos, ordered and harmonious and fixed, is the sublime creation of Hellenic reason" (Sabatier, 1897:69).

<sup>178</sup> That is to say, according to Dewart, there is no transcendent cause external to the world. Further, he conceives transcendence as immanent reality, with the cause of the world enclosed within being.

<sup>179</sup> As we know, in the West universities developed under the tutelage of the Church and monasteries and it may be accepted that most of the early scientists were devout believers in Christianity. Sabatier believed this of Descartes. "Descartes was right: the first step of the human mind desirous of confirming to itself the sense of its own worth and dignity is an essentially religious act" (Sabatier, 1897:24.)



could do so with the help of a stricter empiricism than that of biology; for the scientific method makes no provision for reflecting upon what human beings experience themselves to be, whereas philosophy has had some success in developing techniques for observing, describing, and systematizing what human nature reveals to itself, empirically, about itself. <sup>[180]</sup>

(p. 14)

We shall therefore begin to study human evolution by inquiring into the nature of the human specificity. Our first conclusion is that the essence of human life lies in its having conscious quality; for being conscious is what we immediately experience ourselves to be. Every other specifically human characteristic flows from it. It is, therefore, only because their experience is conscious that human beings have selfhood, or that they enjoy conscious identity; to be a self is to be capable of experiencing one’s reality as a conscious experiencer and as the conscious agent of one’s behaviour. The ability to experience reality as such and oneself as real is the essence of human, conscious life.

We shall then proceed to determine in what consciousness consists. For the moment, however, I need only remark that this quality is not reducible to a function of the organism. I have granted that biochemical processes in the brain (and elsewhere in the organism) are the indispensable and sole causes of consciousness. But it is one thing to say that consciousness is the effect of a biochemical process; it is quite another to suggest that it is a biochemical process. <sup>[181]</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> I suggest that philosophy, by its techniques of observing, describing and systematizing what is experienced by thinking persons may be a very useful approach for understanding the contemporary digital world — an application not explicitly envisioned by Dewart of the posthuman future.

<sup>181</sup> Note that “specificity” is a qualitative term. It is not equivalent to the quantitative term “specification.” In English, many “-ity” words are often contrasted with “-ism” words, “-ity” suggesting phenomenological philosophy, whereas “-ism” suggests scholastic philosophy. By preserving a cause and effect

(p. 15)

Since the conscious quality of human experience is irreducible to an organic function however, the concept of *adjustment* cannot be simply and univocally transferred from animal to human organisms, but must be suitably adapted to take account of the human peculiarities. Human adjustment differs from the animal kind in that man's relations to his environment are mediated by a special kind of experience that endows him with a sense of selfhood and a sense of reality.<sup>182</sup>

(p. 17)

Speech is not reducible to mere communication, but is definable as communication of the assertive kind.<sup>[183]</sup>

(p. 21)

In my suggestion, however, what evolves through the human variant of natural selection is not only the contents of human cultures, but the nature of the experiential functions of individual human organisms — though the evolution of the latter entails the evolution of culture as well, Cultures do evolve, and their evolution is part of the evolution of human nature; but they evolve in accordance with, and subject to, the evolution of the properties of consciousness, which depends upon the evolution of the properties of speech. As I have underlined, human beings need to

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relationship as a duality, Dewart is not a philosopher of reductionism or monism.

<sup>182</sup> I suggest that, in this context, "adjustment" is a forerunner of posthuman technique.

<sup>183</sup> For Dewart, a speaker communicates assertively when he or she attaches the benefit of personal experience to what is being communicated. In other words, humans know what they are talking about. This calls to mind Adolfs' (1966:59) understanding. "By 'communication' I do not simply mean *means* of communication, ... I mean the possibility of communicating with one's fellow men, of making oneself understood and of exchanging meaningful experiences" [Adolf's italics].

adjust to themselves and each other insofar as they are selves; and to the world insofar as it is real. This demand of their nature — for it is created in them by their consciousness — can be met only through their devising some sort of self- and world-interpretation that should render meaningful the reality of the world, of themselves, and of the human situation. And to help them so to meet it is precisely what societies and cultures try to do. <sup>[184]</sup>

(p. 27)

Phenomenology — a procedure that philosophy has long used but which has been especially developed in the twentieth century — is essential to understanding human evolution. What peculiar advantage does this mode of inquiry bring to the study of the humanity of human beings, and therefore to any attempt to understand human origins? It is its willingness to take into account the presence of the observer to the observed. <sup>[185]</sup>

p. 30)

When an individual tries to understand man and world, it is too late for him to do what his ancestors did when they first became human: to begin at the beginning. For he has already been taught to think and inquire by a developing tradition that he did not create, but that on the contrary created him. <sup>[186]</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Dewart insisted throughout his career that humans "devising some sort of self- and world-interpretation that should render meaningful the reality of the world, the reality of themselves, and of the reality of the human situation," can do so only philosophically. In short, meaningfulness, through any human, or posthuman technique, cannot exclude philosophical interpretation.

<sup>185</sup> It is this notion of "presence to" that will remain as an indispensable factor in Dewart's philosophy. It could legitimately be considered a *sine qua non*, of his philosophical project.

<sup>186</sup> In other words, we are born into an environment that is not *tabula rasa*, but into an environment that is "already in progress."

(p. 57)

Below the level of life things inform each other but can take no initiative in shaping their own reality; they are 'inert,' totally at each other's mercy, so to speak. In marked contrast, even the most elementary form of life determines itself in part. For every living organism acts so as to participate in the processes whereby it is related to other beings; its behaviour is 'adaptive.' *Adaptation*, however, does not connote vividly enough the active *self-determination* implied by life. The activity of a living entity contributes to its condition, its 'shape,' at any given time; the events that befall it are not caused exclusively by its environment. Organic life cannot be maintained by any entity except at the expense of foreign substances that it appropriates. At the higher level represented by sentient life, however, the organism's role in determining its life unfolds in a novel, unilateral, *interior* way. Its own causal role overshadows that of the other. <sup>187</sup>

(p. 59)

As the characteristic purposiveness of all life became goal-oriented rather than goal-dictated behaviour, a novel 'freedom' from stereotypy of behaviour appeared; the organism now not only found what it needed, but also sought it and selected it from among objects sensed. For the organism now enjoyed not only the ability to participate in the events that determined its life, but also the ability to determine *how* to take part in such determination; it was responsible for the *quality* of its adaptive responses. It was able, therefore, not only to adjust as a function of the sense information

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<sup>187</sup> For Sabatier this interior way is seen in a life of prayer for the human organism, a movement of the soul. "This act of prayer, by which I mean, not an empty utterance of words, not the repetition of certain sacred formulas, but the movement of the soul putting itself into personal relation and contact with the mysterious power whose presence it feels even before it is able to give it a name" (Sabatier, 1897:28). Dewart and Sabatier agree, I believe, that the human person is responsible for changing itself once it has become "consciously of age."

received, but also adjustively to modify its adjustive behaviour. What mattered at this stage of evolution, in short, was not merely how much and what information was received, but above all how the information was experienced. <sup>[188]</sup>

(p. 62)

Selfhood is not the antecedent, but the consequent, of conscious experience; the only antecedent required by selfhood is an organism that can function consciously, though it is not yet a person. Self-presence enables the experiencer to *differentiate* himself from everything that is other-than-himself; consciousness separates itself from the object that informs it. Being informed is, of course, the pre-condition of the self-differentiation of consciousness from the world; but, by experiencing the other precisely as other, the conscious experiencer stands off from the other; he introduces a di-stance, or interposes a boundary of mutual opposition, between the object and himself. <sup>[189]</sup> So doing is indeed what enables him to experience the object as real, or *as itself*, and himself *as himself*.

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<sup>188</sup> For Dewart, the difference between the animal and the human modes of life lies in the fact that humans can determine a moral quality to their lives by setting and achieving goals. Sabatier draws a similar conclusion from his religious perspective. "Externally [man] does not differ much from the higher animals, the series of which seems to have been closed by his appearance on our planet. His physical organism is composed of the same elements, acting according to the same laws; and of the same organs, performing analogous functions. It is by the incomparable development of his mental life that man is distinguished, and little by little disengages himself from animality. The region of the true, the beautiful, the good, is opened up to consciousness; the moral world is constituted as a higher order to which man belongs. It is these moral laws, capable of dominating physical laws and bending them to higher ends that, in the human animal, realise and constitute humanity" (Sabatier, 1897:13).

<sup>189</sup> Writing "di-stance" is Dewart's way of making and reinforcing a point that may have been lost in common parlance. Di-stance requires duality and duality requires di-stance.

(p. 66/67)

Separate mention should first be made, however, of two human socio-cultural peculiarities that follow from the properties of consciousness and its attendant categories of reality, self, and other. One is *morality*. We have just seen that he who experiences himself as a self will experience responsibility to himself and to others for what he does, and expect others to feel responsible to him for what they do; it is a different question, of course, to what degree he and they allow themselves to accept such responsibility and live up to it. The other peculiarity is the foundation of all those institutions — let us call them *religious* in the widest sense of the term — that embody the response of human beings to their own questions concerning the meaning of human life and death. <sup>[190]</sup>

(p. 68/69)

This means that we need not search for the organic basis of consciousness in any particular type of sensory function or organic receptivity; we should look instead to the way in which the human organism, unlike the animal, can process whatever information it may receive from objects. We should now ponder anew with care: consciousness is a quality that may colour the experiential functioning of the human organism. <sup>[191]</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> It is important for the interpreter of Dewart to bear in mind his definition of religion. He is not a theologian and, as a philosopher he understands religion primarily as the "response of human beings to their own questions concerning the meaning of human life and death." Revelation, traditionally understood, does not play a central role in Dewart's understanding of religion.

<sup>191</sup> Dewart understands human consciousness not simply as a variant characteristic that distinguishes humans from animals in biological terms. Consciousness, of the human type, gives rise to a quality of life that when exercised enables humans to change their experiences. In short, humans can learn from their mistakes.

(p. 106/07)

One should admit that there is no essential difference between the human's and the machine's 'thinking' processes. However, not a few philosophical arguments to the contrary have been comparably wide of the mark, such as those based on the absence of emotion, moral sensibility, and so on, in computers. Strangely, those who raise these objections rarely point out what would be more relevant: that computers are not even alive. Objections based on the supposed differences *what* the computer and *what* human beings can do are beside the point — which is that the computer does not perform at all any of the *vital activities* that the absent-minded project onto them. <sup>[192]</sup> A computer is a machine *for* thinking, not a machine *that* thinks. <sup>[193]</sup>

(pp. 177-79)

When it brought forth speech, evolution by natural selection had itself evolved into a higher form. Now, the proposition that evolution has truly evolved sounds dramatic at first; for natural selection is supposed to be a law of nature, and in the semi-conscious fantasy of most of us natural laws are even more inflexible than the Will of God, since they admit not even of miraculous or merciful exception. Accordingly, the human equivalent of the environmental pressure that operates below man is not the external constraint to adapt or perish, but the intrapsychic pressure to adapt as a self or else suffer the consequences of maladaptation as a self. This peculiarly human quest for 'survival' *as a self* is fuelled by the need for self-identity, which can be

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<sup>192</sup> In Dewart's later writing "to be absent-minded" amounts to lacking an awareness of *some thing*.

<sup>193</sup> To my mind this remains a highly significant paragraph with serious implications for our digital and virtual world where manufactured artifacts mimic the manufacturer to a high degree of accuracy. It is within human capacity to duplicate the pattern of the human thought process in a machine. However, whatever else it may manufacture, humanity cannot manufacture life, i.e. a living organism that thinks. Life is inherited.

satisfied only through self-definition rather than through the mere continuation of organic life. And the need for self-identity — the need to create and develop our selfhood by making assertions about ourselves to ourselves and to others, both in thought and in outward speech — is a natural consequence of the characteristics of a consciousness that has been generated by speech. <sup>194</sup>

(p. 223/24)

If we can say, then, that with the emergence of consciousness the evolutionary mechanism had itself evolved, it is because self-selection operates in the inner environment of consciousness. And since the adjustment that counts towards the evolution of consciousness is to this environment, the variations that human evolution selects for pertain to those characteristics that facilitate or else hinder the adjustment of consciousness to itself. This is true not only of individuals; since the socio-cultural matrix is integrated by individual conscious organisms, every society must reckon with the consciousness of its individual members. The group must adjust to itself. Indeed, the adjustment of the species as a whole to the inner environment created by the interaction of its member groups is the adjustment on which the evolution of human nature ultimately depends. To judge by what we can observe in contemporary primitive societies, the idea that early man was locked in a titanic struggle with a hostile natural world, with physical survival at stake, is a myth. Primitive human life may be harsh, but is not particularly dangerous, since even the most elementary level of consciousness has overkill capacity in the requisite respects. This reflects the fact that consciousness emerged as a by-product of natural selection, not as its direct result; when exercised consciously, general intelligence and ability to learn become multiplied. It cannot be overstressed, however, that man's

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<sup>194</sup> Note the shift of phrase. The phrase: “the external constraint to adapt or perish,” has been replaced by the phrase: “intrapyschic pressure to adapt *as a self*.” Organisms will perish in any case, but it is the quality of life lived between birth and death that matters for Dewart.



self-adjustment ultimately involves organic survival. Individuals, groups, and even the species as a whole are subject to extinction for reasons that have nothing to do with adequate response to challenge from the physical environment, but with the adjustment of individuals and groups to themselves and to each other, and of the species as a whole to the conditions of conscious life that it creates for itself. The direst threats to consciousness are created by consciousness itself. <sup>[195]</sup>

(p. 245)

The construction of their own meaningful identity is for human beings not only a possibility, but a vital necessity; the satisfaction of this need is the specifically human motive and that which qualifies all the other wants and needs that may animate conscious behaviour. The reason is almost paradoxical, as so much in human nature is: that when consciousness first appears it comes into being not only without having any intrinsic meaning (as all other things do), but also (unlike all other things) without having its own identity. The human organism has, of course, the material identity and the organic individuality that can be found in all material and organic entities. As noted [earlier] not only is the human organism originally not a self, but even consciousness has no selfhood when it first comes into being. For the ego cannot antecede consciousness. Since selfhood in the human sense requires the ability to experience oneself as an experiencer, consciousness is a precondition of selfhood. Consciousness is therefore born as nothing but what-the-other-is-other-than; it comes into being as a mere negation, as not-being the object that it experiences. Consciousness is thus hungrier than mere organic life when it comes into the world; it is radically needy, dispossessed to the ultimate degree.

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<sup>195</sup> That consciousness emerged as a by-product of natural selection, not as its direct result, is, in fact, secondary for Dewart. Its primary importance is that the appearance of consciousness in the evolutionary process empowered the human species with the peculiar ability to destroy itself, if mismanaged. Consciousness contains the seeds of its own destruction, as it were.

In contrast, inanimate things come into being already owning whatever identity they can have; they need acquire nothing in order to be what they are. Infrahuman living beings do need others in order to keep themselves alive, to be sure, but their identity does not begin at nothing. For organic reproduction works through the parent's passing on to the offspring a part of itself that is already living. That is, since offspring come into being already alive, there never is a time in the life of any infrahuman organism, not even at the very moment of its origin, when it does not have at least one thing that it could call its own, as it were — namely, its identity as a living organism. <sup>[196]</sup>

(p. 247)

Creating and appropriating one's identity is an arduous task. But it offers proportionate rewards. By integrating themselves living organisms merely stay alive, whereas by integrating itself consciousness enjoys being alive. This implies, of course, that man is also the being who can find life a burden. Whereas the absence of intrinsic meaning is no hardship for mere organic life, for human beings meaninglessness is unbearable. If they cannot perceive meaningfully the real world, therefore, they will invent out of whole cloth one to which they can relate themselves. And they will conjure up a pseudo-identity if they do not have one of their own, or if they cannot tolerate the one that otherwise they would have to acknowledge. Man can seek relief from meaninglessness in any of the myriad ways in which reality and existence can be symbolically or literally denied — even in madness. Unique opportunities are open to man, but he might not

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<sup>196</sup> For human life, however, the process is different. For him, consciousness is not inherited. It must be acquired. It must extricate itself from reality. In order to identify the other, it needs to identify itself as not being the other. Consciousness is the process in which and through which an organism di-stances itself from the world. (He has said this negatively in the preceding paragraph.)

take advantage of them. The possibility of failure is implicit in the possibility of success. <sup>[197]</sup>

(p. 257, n.17/ 58)

The emergence of conscious self-direction, or freedom, as a new dimension of life did not mean that the determining causality of every other factor impinging upon the organism from within and without had vanished. It meant that the self-determination that at the higher levels of animal life enables the organism to govern itself had been transposed into a new key; it now was a function of the organism's awareness of its purposiveness and of the objects of which it might avail itself to fulfil it. But with the new possibility came a correlative requirement: a new level of initiative had to be taken by the human agent before he could exercise his power to seek goals deliberately. For conscious purposiveness merely enables human beings to manage their self-direction; it does not provide automatic deliberate self-direction, the sort of contradiction in terms that the classical conception of free will supposes. <sup>[198]</sup> That is, consciousness enjoys freedom in the sense that it is not predetermined to want whatever it wants; it has the capability of deciding what it shall actually want. It would be absurd to suppose, however, that it is predetermined to exercise such capability.

Self-definition is not to be understood as mere self-knowledge or as reducible to erudition about the ways of man. Self-definition is above all the means through which human selves create their own identity and become free selves.

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<sup>197</sup> "Virtual reality" may be added to Dewart's list of ways of seeking relief of meaninglessness, as I understand his intention. If failing to succeed via the real world, can one achieve success via the virtual world? A posthuman philosophy may hold the answer.

<sup>198</sup> From Dewart's perspective, a "conscious purposiveness" has not truly "come of age," as it were. It is not yet fully human. Fully human consciousness, however, has the potential to lead the human being beyond management to manufacture and programme a machine (computer) that does "provide automatic deliberate self-direction."

We saw the reason earlier in another context: since animals are not conscious, they are unable to experience that their experience is related to their purposiveness; they cannot experience that their experience has the quality of being good or bad. Their purposiveness remains thus extrinsically related to their experience. They can guide themselves by their experience so as to achieve goals; but since they are unaware that they can do so, they cannot experience anything as a means to achieve goals.

(pp. 307-09)

I have already given an illustration of the fact that under the right conditions and in the short run even absent-mindedness [unawareness] can be an asset. Examples closer to home and from more recent times could be adduced, such as the invention of the computer, and in particular of computers having what is misleadingly called 'artificial intelligence.' This event may be deemed a close parallel of the invention of phonetic writing not least of all because it may prove to be the cause of cultural changes comparable in magnitude only to the Sumerian innovation. It is already possible — though with limitations that are certain to be overcome before long — to build computers that (to put it loosely) understand spoken instructions and reply in kind, that can translate from one human language to another, that exercise judgment on the basis of previous experience (for instance, they offer medical diagnoses and prescribe medical procedures), and that seem to think and reason in ways that are distinguishable from the human processes only in being more reliable and exceedingly faster. Of course, a computer that takes verbal instructions and responds with intelligible vocal sounds — either in the same or in another language — discoursing on, say, medical subjects, no more understands speech or medicine than a typewriter *thinks* and then *communicates* its medical wisdom by typing out a medical textbook. It is the human beings who use it, and who interact by means of it, that alone *perform* these activities; the computer could be attributed 'artificial intelligence' only in the same metaphorical sense in which levers might be ascribed 'artificial muscle power.'

Thus, using a computer that has been appropriately programmed to lend him the skills of human medical experts, a person can produce results that surpass what he could do on his own — the very thing that a medical textbook can help him do, though on a much smaller scale.

But many people are unclear about the difference between the activity and the contents of thought; they therefore assume that 'artificial intelligence' is possible, and are inspired to create it. My point is that their not knowing better facilitates their success. For instance, they analyse human speech and thought in order to recreate these processes electronically in computers. Now, if they took into account the assertiveness of speech and thought, they would realize that the threshold requirement for producing these is some sort of self-oriented causal process — in other words, the purposiveness that is found only in living entities — and would therefore deem impossible the creation of a machine with artificial intelligence. Their unawareness of this impossibility, however, holds a paradoxical advantage: speech and thought as they mistakenly conceive them are the kind that can be electronically reproduced. In the end they do not, to be sure, create a true counterpart of the human processes; but what they actually achieve is a marvel none the less, and multiplies immeasurably the power of human beings to bring about change. Now *why* should 'artificial intelligence' be created? And for what *ends* should it be used once it is created? These questions are not likely to be adequately answered either by scientists who are so confused about themselves that they conceive the idea of creating it, nor by the equally perplexed, eager consumers of scientific technology who defer to them.

***HUME’S CHALLENGE AND THE RENEWAL OF MODERN  
PHILOSOPHY*** <sup>[199]</sup>  
**2016**

“A Critical Posthuman Reading”

By a critical posthuman reading of *Hume’s Challenge and the Renewal of Modern Philosophy* I have, in fact, presented a self-challenge to what I already know. By deciding upon issues of agreement, disagreement or suspicion of what Dewart has written in the Preface of this work, I hope to clarify my own thought as well as obtain a better understanding of what he intended. The Preface is unedited and presented verbatim in bold. My reflections follow.

PREFACE

**Soon after philosophy was revived in modern times by René Descartes and given an empirical orientation by John Locke, anglophone philosophy ceased to make much progress in its understanding of the human mind and its conscious quality.**

I like to think that philosophy was always living as long as humans thought critically. It was rooted in human experience, not simply in abstraction. In my view, philosophy as an activity of the human mind “advances” rather than “progresses.” Progress implies an improvement in the human condition in life, whereas, advancement implies a movement in the understanding of experience. Such movement from non-acceptance to acceptance of life’s lessons is more in keeping with the phenomenon of consciousness.

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<sup>199</sup> Acknowledged by Cajetan J. Menke to be Dewart’s unfinished manuscript which has been published posthumously.

**Many philosophers today are likely to agree that, regretfully, although the attempts of modern philosophy to fathom the mind have never come to a standstill, generation after generation the most promising beginnings have in the fullness of time invariably foundered.**

For accuracy and a correct presentation of a philosophical problem the precision of terms is a requirement in any serious assessment. I wonder if philosophical thinking actually "floundered" (struggled ineffectually) rather than "foundered" (became disabled/broke down) as Dewart suggests. Unless he is referring to philosophy as undertaken as a discipline by professional philosophers in the universities, where it may be the case. I suggest that philosophical thinking occurs in the mind of the "common man," but less fruitfully perhaps.

**Quite to the contrary, however, on a very different issue 'a Great Divide' <sup>[200]</sup> bisects today's philosophical community into irreconcilable factions: is it true, as the advocates of 'cognitivism' maintain, that with the advent of this school of thought the stagnation of philosophy and its inability to deal effectively with consciousness have come to an end?**

It seems to me that this "Great Divide," as Dewart refers to it, is characterized by the division between objectivity (cognition) and subjectivity (consciousness). While it has not *always* been recognized within philosophical thinking, the fact that it is recognized today does not mean that one cancels out the other, or that the dichotomy between the two is not there. This is the issue Dewart identifies here, as I see it.

**The proponents of philosophical cognitivism judge that modern philosophy, having enlisted in the service of cognitive science, has finally come of age and now faces a bright future.**

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<sup>200</sup> Chalmers, (1996).

The cognitive "soft sciences" are at the service of philosophy, according to certain philosophers, Dewart tells us. As a result, these scientists believe that there is an improvement in philosophy's perspective for the future since the limitations of the past have been overcome. The phrase "come of age" appears in *The Future of Belief: Theism in a World Come of Age* as the attentive reader will recall. Anyone familiar with Dewart's approach to philosophical inquiry will appreciate how often he reverses the accepted or traditional order of ideas under investigation. In *The Future of Belief* he addresses a mature understanding of theism in the world. In *Hume's Challenge and the Renewal of Modern Philosophy* he addresses a mature philosophical understanding characteristic of postmodernity.

**The reason, they say, is that cognitivism has at long last discovered how to study human cognition as what it truly is, namely, as one among many possible 'realizations' or 'instantiations' of the 'mentality' of processes that can be observed not only in human and infrahuman animals, but even among non-living entities such as computing machines.**

This bright future holds out the possibility of proper progress for the cognitive sciences, which have trumped philosophy as Dewart believes. As I recall reading elsewhere about Dewart's works (at the present moment I cannot locate the reference) by his use of single quotation marks he intends to convey to the reader a reservation concerning the uncritical acceptance of the terms he has identified. That is, there is more to their meaning than their obvious sense in light of the context, which must be taken into account. Realization and mentality (characterizing self-reflective processes) are the qualities of consciousness. Clearly, then, it will be evident to the classical philosopher how problematic, if not impossible, it will be to extend consciousness as a quality to the computer. However, this extension has been imagined in science fiction. Those philosophers of a certain age should be able to recall HAL's famous answer to Dave's command: "I'm sorry Dave, I'm



afraid I can't do that." <sup>201</sup> HAL's ability to read lips, or speechreading as some refer to it, gave him the advantage to consciously recognize and subsequently refuse Dave's order. As I see the question from a philosophical and theoretical point of view: has this ability been acquired via evolution or programmed into the computer?

**This, they say, is necessary, because it is the only way in which philosophy can avoid dualism.**

But why should any concept of dualism be avoided, I ask. I point out that "dualism" is not "duality." It seems to me that duality (a phenomenological understanding) constitutes human experience, and monism does not. Humans seem to seek perpetually a "lost" wholeness to their lives. Evolution, it appears, demonstrates a movement towards diversity (plurality) in life, not towards uniformity (unity). The irony is that the understanding of duality is a product of the evolutionary expansion of knowledge itself. Rather than attempting to avoid a concept of dualism by overcoming diversity in life by seeking union, working to harmonize variety in life (through an appropriate understanding of duality) would be my approach. In Western European philosophy this task of overcoming dualistic existence originated in ancient Greece and continues today. Once the critical intellect was aroused by the ancient Greek philosophers, folk belief was rendered inadequate and through philosophical speculation, the mind turned aside altogether from mythology or religion to work out life's problems along its own lines, through various perspectives.

**The more traditionally-minded amongst us, however, continue to uphold the autonomous, science-independent nature and unique value of philosophical knowledge, as well as the empirically-based conviction that human organisms exhibit mental functions that, on the one hand, are vested in**

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<sup>201</sup> 2001: *A Space Odyssey*, Clarke, Arthur C.

**exclusively material organisms, but which nonetheless, on the other, are truly real and conscious as well as distinct from, and irreducible to, the organism's non-mental functions.**

As human beings we remain dualistic in our thinking preserving Hellenist idealism. This is unavoidable as the history of philosophy reveals, whether in the era of myths, legends and folktales, or the era of classical and critical philosophy. Dualistic thinking continues in our contemporary culture as humans have recorded their thoughts distinguishing between themselves and other creatures. In phenomenological cultures the distinction appears between "the One" and the individual, as a duality but not as a separation. In the ontic cultures the distinction appears as a dichotomy between the individual and all others in the form of being. This distinction is further recognized in the tension between science and philosophy and cannot be erased as long as one remains within the Hellenic philosophical tradition. It is realized through a variety of concepts that combine or relate, the "body" (as an exclusively material organism) and the "soul" (as the organism's non-mental function). Combined or related, body and soul *act* as an organism, but are distinguished as each one functions independently.

**Now, if this should turn out to be true — and time will probably tell — philosophical cognitivism, like many other shooting stars that have risen and fallen in the last two hundred years, is likely to dry out and ultimately evaporate. But that is yet to come, if ever it will.**

Some readers may find it annoying that Dewart consistently uses the subjunctive in his reasoning. This approach leaves the issues with no definite resolution but open to perpetual change. However, the advantage is, as I see it, that the reader must always be prepared to revise his or her stance as consciousness deepens, heightens or expands depending on one's point of view.

**In the meantime, those of us who contest the validity of cognitivism are challenged to account for the causes of what we take to be the stagnation of modern philosophy throughout modern times.**

This question of stagnation is a professional concern within philosophy. It is not sufficient to criticize, one must attempt a solution to the problem as one sees it. Dewart sees cognitivism as a symptom of a stagnant philosophy and seeks to restore philosophy to a dynamic occupation in contemporary academia.

**How did it come about? Why is there no end of it in sight? What is the remedy, if there is one? And how should philosophy reorient itself once it overcomes the obstacles that bar its way to progress? These are the questions that this work has undertaken to investigate.**

It is clear that philosophizing has not ended, professionally or otherwise. It continues but without any apparent advancement. I say "advancement" because "progress" implies a succession of events. Philosophizing does not improve through ideas succeeding one other in a linear time-line as if mythical ideas are less accurate than classical ones, and that classical ones are less accurate than scientific ones. Mythical, classical and scientific ideas arise and are contemporaneous within the experiences and minds of the population and, in fact, each is operative within the individual given the degree of sophistication of his or her intellectual ability. Thus, becoming philosophically sophisticated (reaching the next stage of consciousness) occasions a change in depth of mind of the person. That is, "former" (unsophisticated) ideas cannot remain *truly* operative at any heightened level of consciousness of an individual or a community of like-minded philosophers.

**A sidelight of what we shall find is unusual enough to be worth mentioning before we proceed. Most often, a search for the causes of a phenomenon envisions positive, active factors. Nevertheless, everyday experience teaches us that sometimes**

**an event’s not-happening, its *absence*, has a decisive causal role within a larger process.**

Obviously, Dewart believes in using negative language to say something positive. His is an existential interpretation, not a speculative one, which further illustrates his departure from classical thinking. Dewart might have given the explanation of being cold, or chilly, as due to the experience of an absence of a fire in the fireplace.

**But as we shall conclude, one of the prime causes at work in the historical process that yielded the stagnation of modern philosophy — a process that began with Descartes but which was completed only with the philosophical community’s response to Hume’s contributions — was plain and unwitting *unawareness*, on the part of the philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of several important philosophical developments that had taken place at various earlier times during the late middle ages.**

Unawareness is equivalent to “absent-mindedness” in Dewart’s reasoning. When unawareness (a negative condition) turns to awareness (a positive condition) advancement consciously takes place as improvement. Thus, when superstitious individuals and classical philosophers *choose to remain unaware* this is a cause of the stagnation of philosophy, according to Dewart.

**Neither Descartes nor others in the modern tradition had little [much?] accurate collective recollection of the events surrounding the calamity that had overtaken late scholasticism when in the fourteenth century it succumbed to the prevailing opinion that human reason was radically impotent to demonstrate the existence of the world. All that had survived in the memory of European culture was the aftermath of the catastrophe — namely, the disrepute into which philosophy had fallen once it had been generally agreed that philosophy,**

**and in the first place the human mind, were powerless to establish as little as the bare existence of the world.**

Dewart is referring to the human mind as it developed within European culture and employed the subjective approach in a (failed) attempt to establish objective reality. That is to say, a skeptical conclusion must necessarily arise within European culture. Yet, this is not a universal phenomenon. Contemporary studies on culture and society may provide a forum for reviving philosophy and rescue it from a stagnate state.

**More specifically, the premises from which such bleak conclusion had followed, and the process through which existential skepticism had gained general acceptance, had been entirely forgotten.**

It should be clear to the reader that this remark arises from Dewart’s appreciation of Santayana’s aphorism noted below.

**This was the conclusion in which philosophy was still to be found when Descartes was inspired to come to its rescue — but unfortunately, on the basis of the same misconceptions that had originally generated skepticism and destroyed scholastic thought. Unsurprisingly, the earlier misfortunes of philosophy threatened to descend upon it once again: the project of existential skepticism and terminal philosophical impotence were soon raised by Hume. Now, this time the reaction of the philosophical community was very different from the last — but for all that, it was no less inadequate than it had been originally.**

That Descartes was “inspired” to rescue philosophy recalls Sabatier’s appreciation of religious belief in Descartes thinking, as I noted earlier. However, to my mind Dewart’s use of the word “terminal” hints at the fact that neither Descartes nor Hume could have arrived at any different conclusion, and anyone following in their philosophical footsteps, without contemporary modification,

will arrive at the same inadequacy. In short, Hellenistic philosophy, which neither thinker successfully transcended, leads to a terminal impotence. Posthuman philosophical activity, not confined to the Hellenic view of life, thus may rescue philosophy from such terminal impotence.

**Existential skepticism was almost universally rejected, but unawareness of how the first wave of philosophical destruction had become unleashed played a key role: the false premises on which skepticism had originally depended continued to be generally supposed.**

This is an example of not learning from our mistakes as Dewart sees it. Yet, this unawareness has limited positive effects as Dewart noted earlier.

**And so, widespread existential skepticism was averted, but philosophy had been maimed: the study of the mind was predicated thereafter on the very suppositions that had once presided over the ruin of scholasticism, and whose fallaciousness, though not obvious, undermined every effort to understand the mind.**

In short, mistaken understandings in the study of knowledge were transferred to the study of the mind.

**Philosophy stagnated. Therefore, as we shall have occasion to verify, the historical events that shall concern us in this investigation amount to a case study illustrating the truth of George Santayana's aphorism: "Progress depends on retentiveness. When...experience is not retained...infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."<sup>202</sup>**

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<sup>202</sup> George Santayana, *The Life of Reason: or The Phases of Human Progress*, vol.1. (New York: Scribner's, 1906), 284. Note well: unawareness of the history of philosophy during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries

The use of "infancy" again recalls Dewart's "come of age" perspective that underscores all his later works. Put rather bluntly, humanity must "grow up" in all respects involving life; social, political, economic, and intellectual (philosophical). Except for the last there is historical evidence that humanity is maturing in these areas. However, posthuman philosophy may provide evidence for intellectual maturity.

**Strictly speaking, however, one cannot forget what one has never known. Stated precisely and positively, the point of Santayana's insight is that, since one cannot overcome one's mistakes unless one becomes conscious of them, and since one cannot so become unless one looks back upon past events, one can correct one's mistakes only in retrospect. This is why reflection upon the *history* of philosophy can play not simply a useful, but crucial role, in the investigation of philosophical problems.**

Philosophy is, in fact, an interdisciplinary activity. It cannot be undertaken in isolation from other disciplines. The development of philosophy as a distinct academic discipline somewhat independently of the other disciplines has contributed to its stagnation. Philosophy, in taking consciousness as its object, thereby takes on a new role for itself and the other disciplines. It need not remain determined by its Hellenic heritage. One must be, not merely cognizant, but conscious of something — conscious of education, of globalization, of inter-inculturation, of history, of law, of literature, of logic, of mind, of science, of nature, of religion, of social sciences, of technology, etc. (And, not to be forgotten, a consciousness of philosophy.)

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**explains why the events were repeated (in essential aspects) during the eighteenth; the original appearance of existential skepticism in the fourteenth century requires, a different explanation, namely, the original adoption of the premises that generated existential skepticism.**

**In the absence of historical retrospection, philosophical investigation cannot but perpetuate whatever earlier inadequacies might have hindered, if not prevented, progress. However, the advances made by historians of philosophy in the last century or so can reveal, to those who take them into account, how the stagnation of modern philosophy is rooted in failures of an earlier age. Thus, the historians have given back what we had, as it were, 'forgotten' — or more exactly, what had been absent from our consideration but which is now ours to benefit from. But only if we care to use it, of course. Here's the rub. Modern philosophers have not always taken advantage of as much historical memory as we have regained: for philosophers are human beings, and their attitudes and habits, like their prejudices, change only slowly.**

This is the contemporary human dilemma. We have failed to claim the benefits of an historical perspective, deliberately or otherwise. Humans are free to believe as they please and can choose to remain deliberately ignorant. However, no stretch of the imagination is needed to understand that choosing ignorance is a moral issue in perpetuating past errors.

**True to the orientation modern thought was given by René Descartes at the time of its foundation, modern philosophy has long presupposed that the history of philosophy can never be of much, if indeed any, help towards the solution of philosophical problems.**

Of course, this is a description of the Western philosophical context. In non-Western cultures, in which the development of universities never occurred, the problem of the Hellenic influence in philosophy is a non-issue.

**I argue on the contrary, that the key to overcoming the stagnation of philosophy is to understand the historical process through which the malaise logically came about. This is why in the introductory Chapter of this work I devote as much**



**attention to the issue of how the problem should be approached as I do than elucidation of the nature of the problem itself.**

Dewart's methodology amounts to "new wine in new skins," to employ a biblical phrase. To correct a past error the tools contributing to that error have to be replaced or improved. Immature thinking is not "madness," but the adult mature mind that has "not come of age philosophically" often proposes the same interpretive perspective expecting a different result.

**And yet, I have done no independent research on the historical process that eventually led to the unfortunate outcome; for none is indispensable for grasping at least the fundamentals of the case. The principle historical facts regarding Greek and medieval philosophy on which my argument depends reflects the well-established consensus arrived at by historians of philosophy during the first half of the twentieth century regarding a relatively few Greek and medieval ideas that, as it happens, were transmitted to modern philosophy by Descartes. My contribution to the solution of the problem is limited to promoting out that, when the historical facts that are now known are put together, they explain the stagnation of modern philosophy as the unavoidable effect of historical causes.**

Having done "no independent research" recalls to mind Sabatier's disclaimer in the Appendix of *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion* in which he said: "In this book I have hardly noted any but facts that have been verified in myself and by myself" (Sabatier, 1897:348). The advancement of philosophy, by its own activity, caused its demise in that it failed to meet the growing sophisticated intellectual needs of Western humanity. Under the circumstances, this was unavoidable. Had the Church adopted a non-Hellenic perspective in its doctrinal formulations, most likely there would have been a different outcome in its theological understanding.

**For when certain traditional ideas were pursued to their logical consequences, the unintended effect, given the absence of what had been 'forgotten,' was that modern philosophy's endeavour to understand the conscious mind became mired in assumptions whose mutual contradiction was not readily apparent. If the historians themselves have not remarked on this, it is probably because, as specialists are notoriously wont to do, the historians of the three philosophical ages have not always been in touch with each other. They have not always considered the consequences that the philosophical thought of their favourite period may have had when it was imported by a later age into a new intellectual environment.**

I assume that Dewart intends the same classification of philosophical stages as Sabatier who follows Comte. "Comte's theory of the three stages through which human thought has passed is well known: the theological stage of primitive times, the metaphysical stage in the Middle Ages, the positive or scientific stage of modern times" (Sabatier, 1897:8). The lack of cooperation among professionals is not uncommon. Dewart suggests that increased cooperation would deepen the awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of each specialists' speciality. Hence his next comment.

**I gladly acknowledge the source of my inspiration to turn to the history of philosophy for an explanation of the difficulties in which modern philosophy has increasingly found itself since Descartes and Hume: it was John Searle's remarkable study of *The Rediscovery of the Mind*. (MIT press, 1992) The philosophical investigation of the mind, he suggested, had become disoriented and should not expect to make true progress unless it became conscious of the assumptions that impeded its understanding the mind, and unless it identified correctly what it had to explain.**

In the Western legal tradition, a correct "joining of the issue" to determine the case to be decided could be cited here as a parallel

example. The correct question must be posed to get the correct answer.

**Searle's insightful work was squarely on target. I thought, insofar, as it looked to history to teach us how philosophy had lost its way and why was likely to regain it bearings only after learning how its waywardness had come about. In my estimation, however, Searle's strategy was unnecessarily restricted in scope. Being highly conscious (as my philosophical education had, by chance rather than design, made me) of the continuity of the history of philosophy throughout its three major epochs, it seemed to me in order to understand the situation of philosophy today it would be essential, first, to go back to the very beginning of the tradition, and, second, to pay special attention to the transition from medieval to modern philosophy. Only then could one begin to grasp the inexorable logic of the process whereby modern philosophy unwittingly condemned itself, in the end, to having to explain the mind on the basis of assumptions that make it impossible to do so.**

The reader may "go back to the very beginning of the tradition" in Dewart's sense by following the development of his critique of Hellenization throughout his earlier works, which amounts to a *ressourcement* of sorts. From his perspective, the transition period from medieval to modern philosophy has not been completed. This is Dewart's understanding and is not to be presumed exclusive on his part, nor required by other philosophers.

**Philosophy owes it to itself to remember where it has been and how it got to where it is now, before it decides in which direction it should strike next.**

Implied here, it seems, is the continued acceptance by Dewart of philosophy as *an isolated professional discipline* in its own right.

**However, in this essay I have barely touched on the high points of a rather complex sequence of intellectual events. The general structure of the causal historical process as I have set it down is, I think, fairly clear, but many of its details remain tantalizingly obscure.**

"Tantalizingly obscure" indicates to me Dewart conscious intention to retain his elliptical style of philosophizing in writing this book.

**As for the suppositions that I propose here concerning cognition, reality, and causality as replacements of the traditional versions of these concepts, I recognize they may amount only to an uncertain and unhelpful step towards the reconstruction of modern philosophy.**

As noted earlier, this work was not edited by Dewart. Thus, any scholar of Dewart's writing will no doubt recognize the inconsistencies that often arise within a work not finally approved by an author. The word "replacement" is a case in point. I speculate that Dewart might have ultimately said "advancement" instead of "replacement" in the understanding of cognition, reality, and causality.

**Nevertheless, if this work arouses the interest of open-minded scholars and stimulates them to investigate in depth the questions I raise here but which I answer only superficially, and if it moves them to reset the compass of philosophy on a more promising course than I have been able to suggest, my fondest objectives in writing this book will have been attained.**

Dewart's objectives may become somewhat realized through the compass of philosophy reset through a posthuman perspective.

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DIOCESE OF THUNDER BAY,  
P.O. Box 10400, Thunder Bay, Ont. P7B 6T8  
Telephone: 807 343-9313: Fax: 807 343-9114

17 October 2005

Leslie Dewart, PhD,  
14 Prospect,  
Toronto, ON  
M4X 1C6

Dear Dr. Dewart,

I am contemplating writing a book based on the philosophical perspectives that appear in your published works. As an undergraduate student at St. Michael's College, (1971-1974), I took philosophy classes from you and remember them as among the most exciting and informative aspects of my education at U. of T. They have had a lasting influence and that accounts for my desire to write a book that incorporates the development of your personal philosophical perspective. To this end I conceive the book as an "intellectual biography" more than an exposé of your thought.

Therefore, I am wondering if you would consent to be interviewed for the book. I believe that an "intellectual biography" has a subjective component that can be best articulated through a series of questions addressed by the interviewee. To my mind, the interview could be conducted in person and taped for later transcription. Alternatively, written responses could be supplied to a list of questions.

If you are in a position to assist in this project please advise me accordingly. Further arrangements can then be made to accommodate us both.

With every good wish,

(Rev) Allan Savage, DTh



Prof. Leslie Dewart, M.A., LL. B., PhD.

Prospect St., • Toronto, Ont. • M4X 1C6 •

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ldewart@chass.utoronto.ca  
(416) 961-4228

2005, October 24

The Rev. Allan Savage, DTh  
Diocese of Thunder Bay,  
P. O. Box 10400,  
Thunder Bay, Ont., P7B 8T8

Dear Father Savage,

I cannot adequately tell you how much I regret that I am unable to accede to your request. Unfortunately, the state of my health is such that I have no other option. It has not been so very good for some years, but in fairly recent times a number of minor but crippling ailments have combined with a major one to prevent any but minimal physical and mental exertion on my part.

I am especially sorry because your project, as you describe it, seems to me intended as an original contribution that continues and develops—instead of merely recounting—what you have found useful in my work. For a teacher, to inspire his students and be surpassed by them is much more rewarding than merely to have been admired and understood by them.

Your memories are as indulgent as your request is kind. I thank you for both and send you my best wishes for your continued success in all your endeavours.

Sincerely,

(Leslie Dewart)